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General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-third Session

8th plenary meeting
Monday, 21 September 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mangoaela (Lesotho), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Guntis Ulmanis, President of the Republic of Latvia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mr. Guntis Ulmanis, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Guntis Ulmanis, President of the Republic of Latvia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ulmanis (*spoke in Latvian; interpretation furnished by the delegation*): Allow me to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on his election and to wish him success in discharging his duties. I wish us all a constructive fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

In 1995, the United Nations system commemorated its golden anniversary. This year, the United Nations celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is a major accomplishment for humankind. The Declaration has inspired the development of a reliable and effective international system for the protection of human rights.

At the time of the adoption of the Universal Declaration, Latvia was under Soviet occupation. The Soviet Union did not respect human rights, even though it participated in the preparation and adoption of the Declaration. I will mention one example among many violations of human rights: three and a half months after the adoption of the Declaration, the people of Latvia, including myself, experienced the largest of several deportations. Tens of thousands of people, even elderly people and children, were deported to the gulag. This left a lasting mark on the collective consciousness of the people of Latvia and significantly altered the demographic situation.

During the period of occupation, the people of Latvia were unable to utilize fully the human-rights protection system of the United Nations. That situation changed as Latvia restored its independence. In the seven years since Latvia became a Member of the United Nations, it has benefitted from the moral and political support of the largest international organization.

Immediately after the restoration of independence, our nation had to achieve the removal of a foreign military force. This process was helped by two General Assembly resolutions and the good offices of the Secretary-General. I am pleased to announce that less than a month ago the last military installation of the Russian Federation in Latvia — the early-warning radar station in Skrunda — was closed. This event illustrates that international institutions can constructively assist in the fulfilment of bilateral agreements. Cooperation

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between Latvia and the United Nations has been rich in accomplishments. The experience gained in the United Nations community has helped us in our democratic development.

At present, Latvia is paying particular attention to economic and social development. Latvia is experiencing healthy economic growth at present. Latvia has one of the highest rates of growth in gross national product and one of the lowest rates of inflation among European Union candidate States. It has a balanced budget, and expects to have one next year also. This creates justifiable optimism that the process of accession to the European Union will continue successfully.

The development of an integrated society is a national priority. This is a complicated task because the Soviet regime intentionally created a situation in which Latvians almost became a minority in their own country. Nevertheless, Latvia is dealing resolutely with this task. By the end of the year the Government will have completed the elaboration of a programme for the integration of society. This programme will stimulate the development of a civil society and provide more opportunities for the learning of the Latvian language. When implemented, the programme will permit all residents of Latvia to participate to an even greater extent than at present in public and civic life. Already Latvia ensures broad opportunities for the development of the culture of various ethnic groups and for education in their mother tongues.

This past June, Latvia's parliament adopted a far-reaching decision about changes in the citizenship law. Most of the major political forces support these changes in the citizenship law. Shortly, the people of Latvia will voice their opinion of these changes in a referendum.

Cooperation with United Nations institutions, especially the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has enhanced the social and economic welfare of Latvia's inhabitants. The UNDP has helped our country resolve sensitive and important issues of integration. On behalf of the Government of Latvia, I would like to express gratitude for the assistance provided by the UNDP in enhancing the welfare of Latvia's inhabitants. The successful cooperation should continue.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights spurs a consideration of Latvia's possible contributions to the human-rights protection system. As a first-time member of the Commission on Human Rights beginning next year, Latvia will support the promotion of human rights as a priority of the United Nations, and the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights as the primary institution for that task. Latvia believes that the priority role of human rights requires increased funding. Latvia has decided to continue to support financially the project for the development of national human rights institutions.

On the country level, I may note the National Human Rights Office which has operated actively in our country for several years and which is the first institution of its kind in Central and Eastern Europe. The Office was established with the support of the United Nations. Latvia desires to continue this constructive cooperation with the United Nations. In support of the reform package proposed by the Secretary-General, the Government of Latvia will establish "United Nations House". By the end of the year a building in Riga will be the home of five institutions of the United Nations system.

It is significant that during the golden anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration, the United Nations diplomatic conference in Rome adopted a decision to establish an international criminal court. Latvia supports the establishment of an effective court and hopes that an overwhelming majority of United Nations Member States will do likewise.

The best protection for human rights is a world in which peace and security prevail. The bipolar order, with its characteristic threats to peace and security, is gone. However, the world is still unsafe. International terrorism and crime are growing, access to weapons of mass destruction is growing, ethnic conflicts exist, and threats to the ecology of our planet are mounting.

In order to solve these problems, the enhanced participation of the United Nations, including the Security Council, is essential. To fulfil its role effectively, the Security Council must reflect the real balance of the world's economic and social power and use skilfully the resources available to it. Latvia reiterates its continued support for an expansion of the Council that would result in the equitable representation of small States and all regional groups.

As I speak from this rostrum, I appreciate the rare opportunity to address the shapers of world political opinion. We, the leaders of the United Nations Member States, must realize clearly that the highest mission of the United Nations is service to humankind. The United

Nations should become a universal Organization. It will retain credibility in the eyes of the world only if the results of its efforts are clearly evident.

A prerequisite for this credibility is the ability to condemn and deter those who have violated internationally accepted norms of behaviour. The United Nations has shown the ability to do this on many occasions. I believe the time has come for world society to evaluate one of the most inhumane regimes of this century — Soviet totalitarianism. I take this opportunity to call upon victimized peoples to commence a joint effort to evaluate its legacy. The people of Latvia have endured the horrors of Soviet and Nazi occupations and therefore have the right to appeal to world society to do everything in its ability to avert the future appearance of similar scourges.

The President took the Chair.

We live in an era when the human mind has created much that is useful for promoting mutual respect and understanding in our everyday lives. I hope that the results of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly will be a lasting investment in shaping the United Nations for the next millennium.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Latvia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Guntis Ulmanis, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Seyed Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Seyed Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency Mr. Seyed Mohammad Khatami, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Seyed Khatami (*spoke in Persian; interpretation furnished by the delegation*): The light of human existence is kindled by man's longing for salvation. The essence of the message of divine prophets and the content of the teachings of prominent sages have been primarily aimed at human salvation. It is painful to observe in the arena of human history the deprivation and abject misery of human beings; the deprivation of women, men and children enslaved by the whims of the ruling powers; and the ill fate of rulers deprived of compassion and sympathy for their own nations. Hence, virtuous rule and good governance have been evanescent in human history.

Ironically, much too often will and freedom of thought have been frustrated and liberty suffocated in the name of salvation, and much too often salvation has been portrayed as disposing of any and all restraints on insatiable human desires. Reason and love have thus been sacrificed at the altar of the whim. At times, liberty has been trampled in the name of justice, and at other times justice has been obliterated in the name of freedom. The result has been humanity's age-old deprivation from both justice in liberty and liberty in justice.

It is only a few centuries since genuine knowledge began to be construed as the source of power rather than an agent of its control. Ever since, knowledge, instead of serving human salvation and exalting human character, has been used as an instrument in the hands of those whose only object is to advance their own narrow, utilitarian self-interest.

Despite its magnificent progress, humanity has suffered massively over these centuries from discrimination and anguish. Survivors are still among us who can testify to the incalculable destruction caused by the two world wars, and despite the birth of the United Nations — a positive achievement for mankind — true peace based on justice still remains a scarcity.

Particularly desperate is the situation of the countries in the underdeveloped world, where so many still suffer from famine, illiteracy and disease, and some remain at the mercy of rulers who do not even take the trouble of pretending to respect democratic standards or enjoy popular support. So often they attempt to replace the absence of popular support by dependence on power whose sole purpose is the pursuit of domination and self-interest.

Oppressive and dependent governments deny their people the opportunity to experience democracy by perpetuating intimidation and terror in society, and they promote a culture of violence which inadvertently leads their opponents to resort to the same. The powers that breed and nurture such regimes can therefore not escape blame. Primarily responsible here are those powers whose intelligence services take pride in their dark record of overthrowing popular governments and supporting unpopular ones.

This image of our world is indeed grim and repulsive. Until the day that the wise and the learned wrest the reins of power from the unwise and the capricious, this image cannot at all be transformed.

Nonetheless, in my opinion, beyond the darkness and doom, genuine beauty can still be discerned in the deeper layers of history. I can assert with certitude that, on the whole, human life has blossomed spiritually and materially. Anti-colonial struggles and independence movements of many nations in this century exemplify this blossoming and progress. The collapse of the bipolar world order in the final decade of this century and the swift march of the world towards diversity, coupled with renewed assertion of identity in the international arena by nations demanding equality, are other significant achievements in this direction.

The fantasy of a unipolar world ruled by a single super-Power is but an illusion, indicating the failure of its holders to keep pace with history. I am confident that powerful nations, such as the American people, will not accept that their good name, potential and national prestige be exploited for the advancement of the dream of a unipolar world by the politicians, motivated by the short-sighted material and factional interests of a few. The evolution of public opinion in the West in support of peaceful relations on the basis of mutual respect testifies to this assertion.

Now allow me to speak here as a man from the East, the origin of brilliant civilizations and the birthplace of divine prophets — Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed, peace be upon them all. I come from the noble land of Iran, representing a great and renowned nation famed for its ancient civilization, as well as for its distinguished contribution to the founding and expansion of the Islamic civilization, a nation that has survived the strong winds of despotism, reaction and submission, relying on its cultural and human wealth. It is a nation which pioneered in the East the establishment of civil society and constitutional government in the course of its contemporary history, even though, as a result of foreign interference and domestic deficiencies, at times it may have faltered in its course; a nation which has been at the forefront of the struggle for independence and against colonialism, although its national movement was subverted by a foreign-orchestrated coup. And it is a nation which carries the torch of its popular revolution, not won by force of arms or a coup, but by dethroning a regime of *coup d'état* through the power of the enlightened word. In the course of its new experience, our nation has endured eight years of an imposed war, pressure, sanctions and various unfair accusations. It has also fallen victim to terrorism, the ominous phenomenon of the twentieth century.

Today, the Iranian nation draws on its past to contemplate a better future, while defying reactionary tendencies and, backed by principles and ideals rooted in its religious, national, historical and revolutionary heritage and benefiting from positive achievements of contemporary civilization, marches, be it through trial and error, towards a promising tomorrow.

The Islamic revolution of the Iranian people was a revolt of reason against coercion and suppression. Certainly, a revolution which resorted to logic in the phase of destruction is much better disposed to resort to dialogue and reason in the phase of construction. Hence, it calls for a dialogue among civilizations and cultures instead of a clash between them.

From this rostrum and the pulpit of the United Nations, I announce that humanity, despite all calamities and hardships, is heading towards emancipation and liberty. This is the unalterable divine providence and human destiny. The malice and depravity of no individual can ever violate divine providence and the course of history.

The word "history" predates "philosophy", and man is the pillar of history. History itself is the reflection of the light of being upon various facets and dimensions of human existence. Thus, it is a unique and universal entity, albeit diverse in nature. Whenever this unique entity takes on a new guise, a new era is ushered in. Our assessment of history indeed emanates from our perception of humanity — its pivot and pillar.

Human beings, who, in the Persian poet Saadi's eloquent description borrowed from a saying of the holy Prophet of Islam, are various organs of the same body,

are outside the reach of biology or psychology. Understanding human beings requires a philosophical and reflective view of man and history. God created man with His own hand and in His own image, and He breathed into him of His own spirit, and thus humanity is but a single entity, and so is its history. The hand of God granted humankind history, will and freedom of choice; the image of God provided him culture, spirituality and liberty; and the spirit of God bestowed upon him life and vitality. Thus, human beings have come to possess history, culture and liberty.

Not only do all human beings originate from one and the same origin and share a continuous and integrated history, but also one may further postulate a single final purpose. This purpose of history is none other than spiritual culture, and genuine human liberty is its absolute prerequisite.

Whether or not one subscribes to the view that man is doomed to whirl in iterative historical cycles or to grapple with historical moments or epochs, and whether or not one holds history to be self-driven, driven by human urges, by modes of production or by superhuman heroes, everyone can agree that it is only the ever-inspiring fountain of faith that breaks every old and new shackle from humanity and arrests the iterative eternal cycle, eventually emancipating humankind from the bounds of historical determinism, just as it is only the vivifying breeze of liberty that can offer faith and spirituality to humanity.

It is thus that humankind could, in consonance with the mystic Persian poet Hafez, serenade that

> "I will subvert this high inverted vault if it should ere rotate 'gainst my dictate."

Or, in the words of the Gospel according to Saint Mark,

> if one had faith in God one could say to the mountain
>
> "Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea" (*The Holy Bible, Mark 11:23*)

Through such an understanding of freedom, the tenets of human dignity can be upheld in the face of political domination and virtue, and hope against baneful blasts of despair and nihilism. Here, one can discern the trajectory of history towards liberty.

The history of humankind is the history of liberty. Only that interpretation which describes history as the arena for manifestation of liberty can provide an opening of the past for the benefit of mankind. Regardless of all philosophical systems that have attempted to attribute meanings, directions and laws of evolution to history, we can realize that because human history is intertwined with the history of liberty, when human beings are liberated from imposed constraints of exploitation and social enslavement, as well as from unrefined animal instincts such as violence and savagery, they will then side with truth and justice in line with their human nature. Thence, human history shall become the glorious history of truth and realization of justice. And this could be another expression of the famous religious doctrine of Messianism.

Whether we embark on an empirical and inductive study of history or an intuitive one, most thinkers would agree that the essence of humanity has flourished and that more veils of ignorance have been removed from the minds of human beings.

I have deliberately used the word "flourished" instead of the more common terms, such as "historical progress", in order to emphasize that, whatever school of philosophy of history we may follow, we can still share an understanding of this general and universal conception of history.

The establishment and continued functioning of the United Nations is a testament to the progressive path of the world and of human history. Today it does not require much argument to establish that instead of war and bloodshed one could and indeed ought to resort to discourse and dialogue. That fact has not been achieved easily, as if the bloodstained history of humanity forms an antecedent to this seemingly simple proposition.

Yet so long as imprudent potentates can obliterate flowers and trees, hope and mirth from the face of the Earth with a quick stroke of their folly and cruelty, it is premature to celebrate the ultimate triumph of the Logos over the sword.

The twentieth century did not only witness the manifestations of violence and human sufferings at the hands of old colonialists and the unprecedented injustice of their modern heirs; it was also the century of the rise and fall of totalitarian regimes. Let us hope that in the coming century resort to force and violence shall not be glorified and that the essence of political power shall be compassion and justice, externally manifested in dialogue between civilizations.

The question is how the United Nations may take the necessary measures to respond to this evolving global climate, and what impact it will have on the changing course of the life of mankind longing for salvation.

I would like to propose, in the name of the Islamic Republic of Iran, that the United Nations, as a first step, designate the year 2001 as the "Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations", in the earnest hope that through such a dialogue the realization of universal justice and liberty may be initiated.

Among the worthiest achievements of this century is the acceptance of the necessity and significance of dialogue and the rejection of force, the promotion of understanding in the cultural, economic and political fields, and the strengthening of the foundations of liberty, justice and human rights. The establishment and enhancement of civility, whether at the national or international level, is contingent upon dialogue among societies and civilizations representing various views, inclinations and approaches. If humanity, at the threshold of the new century and millennium, devotes all its efforts to institutionalizing dialogue, replacing hostility and confrontation with discourse and understanding, it will leave an invaluable legacy for the benefit of future generations.

Similarly, it is necessary that as members of the United Nations we revisit the history of the formation of this Organization, with a view to reforming and improving the institution through a rational exchange of views.

The United Nations took shape in a dark era of human history, when many of its current members were still experiencing the bitter and abominable conditions of colonial rule. As a consequence, the new Organization reflected the domination of the powerful few. Things have changed now, and the opportunity has presented itself to restructure this Organization, particularly its Security Council. Here I would like to refer to the wise statement of the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran in his inaugural address to the Eighth Session of the Islamic Summit Conference, held in Tehran, that the Islamic countries, representing one billion and several hundred million people, should acquire a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council, with the same privileges as current permanent members, as long as they are enjoyed by those members.

The time has come to reject, through understanding, the discriminatory veto privilege, and in so doing take another step towards the recognition of fair and equal rights of all Member States.

Let us all join hands in solidarity against genocide, aggression and the humiliation of mankind in various corners of the world. Let us prevent the continuation of shameful tragedies which have tarnished the face of this century in Palestine, Afghanistan and Kosovo, and in many other parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Peace and security in the Middle East, imperative as they are, will only be established through the recognition of the right of all Palestinians to exercise sovereignty over their ancestral homeland. The presently occupied Al-Quds al-Sharif ought to be the house of dialogue and understanding. Resonating from the depth of history, its voice speaks intrinsically against racism and Zionism. Great monotheistic religions can live peacefully together in Al-Quds al-Sharif, but it is the very Israeli rule that has made such a coexistence impossible. Palestine is the home of all Palestinians — Muslims, Christians and Jews — and not a laboratory for the violent whims of Zionists.

In Afghanistan, there is no military solution to that country's predicament. The universal outrage at the massacre and genocide being perpetrated there — particularly the tragic killing of Iranian diplomats and a journalist, as well as at the continued captivity of the Iranian aid workers in the hands of the Taliban — calls for sober analysis and expeditious action to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice.

Afghanistan, the land of people of dignity and culture, has now been turned into a haven for violence, terrorism and the production of and trafficking in narcotics. The Afghan people, as other peoples in the world, have the inalienable right to determine their own destiny and the right to enjoy a broad-based Government representing all ethnic groups, communities and tendencies in that country. This is the only way to restore tranquillity in Afghanistan. This requires resolute international cooperation in order to inhibit the lucrative and deadly business of producing and smuggling narcotics, illicit trafficking in weapons and cultivation of terrorism. The United Nations, in cooperation with the Organization of the Islamic Conference and all concerned States, should bring all the parties to the conflict to the negotiating table, paving the way for the tyrannized and destitute Afghan people to freely determine their own destiny and, backed by solemn global support, should bring the rogue elements into compliance with the will of

the international community. Simultaneously the Organization should plan for the mobilization of requisite international assistance for the reconstruction of Afghanistan once the necessary political conditions are in place.

In Kosovo, the legitimate rights of the embattled people should be recognized, and the Yugoslav Government should be made to respect these rights.

Honest and sincere efforts to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including state terrorism, constitute another important priority for the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Terrorism is a product of desperation and nihilism. In a world swirling in the orbit of violence and oppression, serious combat against terrorism will not advance beyond the realm of words and slogans. The eradication of terrorism must be concurrent with a global search for justice.

This assertion should in no way be interpreted as a justification for any form of terrorism. As required by our religious, moral and cultural values and norms, we unequivocally oppose all forms and manifestations of terrorism, and we shall combat it vigorously and earnestly. In our view, in order to eradicate this menace, we should engage in serious and transparent international cooperation to combat terrorism, and at the same time redouble our efforts to attain the objective of global justice.

At the threshold of the third millennium, the world also needs to be liberated from the nightmare of nuclear war and weapons of mass destruction. Recent nuclear tests in our region, which have led to further complications, make this all the more imperative. We should all realize that the idea of attaining security through the acquisition of such armaments is nothing but an illusion.

The manifestation of a resolute global determination to eliminate all existing arsenals of weapons of mass destruction within an agreed time-frame would provide a clear objective and lend credence and add dynamism to the international efforts against the production and proliferation of these deadly weapons. The establishment of zones free from weapons of mass destruction, particularly in the Middle East, constitutes an appropriate first step in alleviating tension and mistrust emanating from these weapons. We in the Islamic Republic of Iran, as victims of the use of weapons of mass destruction, are more cognizant than anyone else of their horrifying impact. We shall thus stay at the forefront of international efforts to establish and strengthen universal arrangements for their destruction.

Security, development and prosperity in the third world require the promotion of cooperation and the utilization of proven arrangements and mechanisms for confidence-building. In this regard, it is encouraging that the Eighth Islamic Summit Conference in Tehran, cognizant of this necessity, established an appropriate mechanism to foster confidence through dialogue among Islamic countries.

As a first step in this direction, I invite our neighbours in the Persian Gulf region, who have witnessed two destructive wars in the span of one decade, to establish a security and cooperation system in the area.

In short, confidence and peace cannot be attained without a sober revision of the mentality of the cold war. The advancement and promotion of a culture of peace is contingent upon the recognition of the constructive role of nations coupled with avoidance of domination, unilateralism, confrontation and exclusion.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, in keeping with its fundamental beliefs and deep-rooted heritage of civilization, seeks a world blessed with peace and tranquillity based on human dignity. It has accorded the highest priority in its foreign policy to the removal of tension. In line with the principles of the Islamic revolution, Iran is determined to follow its balanced policy of expanding relations with its neighbours and other countries on the basis of respect for independence and equality of rights.

Comprehensive peace, over and above peace among human beings, also calls for peace between mankind and nature, which in turn requires that mankind bring to a halt the systematic devouring of nature and instead emphasizes the coordination of man and nature. The preservation of the environment, as the common natural heritage of mankind, constitutes a most important priority of the coming century.

Before concluding, I would like to emphasize the paramount role of the family, women and youth in the making of a better tomorrow and the consolidation of the foundations of civil society throughout the globe.

The family is the unique setting for human progress and the development of the personal and social identity of individuals. Regrettably, today, especially in the industrialized countries, the foundations of home and family have been undermined, threatening the emotional, material and spiritual health of human life. A global

effort is required to confront this danger, lest the flames of this centre of warmth, affection and education be gradually dimmed by the cold and vicious winds of alluring facades, lust and material gain.

Efforts at the global level geared to the promotion and strengthening of respect for women and their rights require a critical reassessment of the traditional and inappropriate views about women. The traditional outlook, based on the erroneous notion of the superiority of men over women, does injustice to men, women and humanity as a whole. Equally nefarious is the view that disregards the differences between men and women. We should recognize that both men and women are valuable components of humanity who equally possess the potential for intellectual, social, cultural and political development, and that comprehensive and sustainable development is possible only through the active participation of both men and women in social life.

At the threshold of the new millennium, the United Nations should have faith in the new generation, to whom the next century belongs. It should thus be prepared to accept and embrace the requirements of believing in youth. Let us bring ourselves to accept that we are not custodians of youth and that the young do have the right to enjoy the social process of growth and development, a right they should exercise consciously and wilfully. With such a new perspective, and drawing upon the dynamic ability and intellectual capability of the new generation, we can together chart a much better and brighter future for the next century.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Seyed Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Her Excellency Mrs. Rosario Green.

Mrs. Green (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The election of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session is a source of pride for Latin America and the Caribbean. I am personally familiar with the talent, experience and diplomatic skill of Minister Opertti and I am convinced that these qualities will help to guide, motivate and strengthen our work.

My delegation would also like to express its appreciation to Hennadiy Udovenko for the outstanding work that he accomplished as President at the session that just closed.

Last July, we had the honour of welcoming our Secretary-General to Mexico. On that occasion we observed anew his firm and resolute commitment to strengthen the United Nations, adapting it to confront the challenges of the end of the century. We recognize in Kofi Annan a man with a clear vision of the future of the Organization, and we are confident that he will know how to guide it in this transition stage towards a new millennium.

Mexico is a country with a profound multilateral calling. Our desire to seek international agreement finds fertile ground for development in this forum. It is for this reason that we are convinced of the urgent need to strengthen it and to seek within it shared answers to the challenges that the new global agenda presents.

Mexico's commitment to the United Nations does not consist of words alone. A week ago, the Government of President Ernesto Zedillo reconfirmed this by sending the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families to the Mexican Senate for approval. From the very beginning of negotiations on that Convention, over which Mexico had the honour of presiding, we insisted on the importance of having legal instruments to ensure respect for and protection of the rights of migrant workers. By taking that step, Mexico is showing its unswerving commitment to the norms of international law and is making progress in consolidating itself as a State of law.

Convinced of the need to strengthen the international system that makes it possible for us to have the will and the necessary instruments to confront together the challenges of the end of the century, President Zedillo promoted the convening of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to the problem of drugs. As of that meeting, principles of responsibility shared among States and of strict respect for sovereignty, territorial

integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States replaced the scenario of mutual recrimination and unilateral evaluations. We now have the bases for a global consensus regarding the policies that must be adopted by States in order to consolidate an unprecedented effort at cooperation based on this new global, integral and balanced strategy. Mexico will not regress in its efforts to implement the commitments that we adopted last June.

The international agenda today, as reflected in the agenda of the General Assembly, is very broad and complex. I would like to refer on this occasion to only three questions which I consider to be of particular relevance: disarmament, which has been a constant issue in Mexico's foreign policy; the reform of our Organization, which will help to shape the community of nations in the next century; and the international financial crisis, which greatly jeopardizes the efforts of our countries to attain full development, as well as our ability to advance towards the future.

As far as the subject of disarmament is concerned, there is no doubt that the existence of nuclear arsenals remains one of the central problems in international relations. The threat of an atomic conflagration cannot be disregarded, and we must reiterate our commitment to fashioning a world which is free of nuclear weapons. For Mexico, the objective of eliminating these instruments of mass destruction is realistic and viable. It is time to set aside arguments that, for strategic reasons, have served to conceal the efforts of those who either do not want to give up their present nuclear capacity or else want to join the group of countries that possess this destructive ability. One can contribute to nuclear disarmament only by eliminating nuclear weapons. This is why we seek to broaden and strengthen international commitments in this respect. Our political conviction is that we must achieve new agreements that remove this scourge from humankind.

Mexico condemns all nuclear testing from principle and out of conviction. We affirmed this recently in the light of the tests conducted by India and Pakistan. Far from contributing to stability and regional balance, such actions promote the proliferation of uncertainty and fear. They also contribute to a climate conducive to the nuclear arms race.

I would like on this occasion to reiterate Mexico's conviction that dialogue and negotiation are and will remain the irreplaceable means of resolving disputes. It was in that spirit that last 9 July we supported a ministerial statement that sought to define a new agenda for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. We co-sponsors of that declaration introduced a draft resolution that we hope will receive the resolute support of Member States so that we can in that way demonstrate the resolve of the community of nations to move towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

We are also committed to a new, integral approach to the subject of disarmament and the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction or weapons with excessively cruel and inhuman effects. There has been progress recently in the Conference on Disarmament related to security guarantees and the prohibition on the production of fissionable materials destined to be used for such weapons.

We are likewise pleased at the growing support being given to the treaties on anti-personnel landmines and on chemical and bacteriological weapons. In particular, we are gratified at the entry into force on 1 March 1999 of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Once again we urge the countries that have not yet done so to ratify as soon as possible these conventions that seek to eliminate such weapons from the face of the Earth.

The proliferation of small arms and its link with criminal organizations and drug-trafficking constitute a significant challenge to the majority of nations. Combating this is a priority of the Government of Mexico. The Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, which was the result of a Mexican initiative, is of crucial importance and should therefore be taken into account in further negotiations on transnational crime.

In the present situation, which demands that we clearly define the framework for international relations and adapt it in a timely way, the initiatives for reforming our Organization presented by the Secretary-General acquire special significance. The United Nations must reform itself if it is to remain a central force in our collective lives.

We must recognize that traditional mechanisms for harmonization and negotiation are showing clear signs of exhaustion. We must rethink these strategies in order to deal with old and new problems. The consolidation of a structure which is truly democratic, transparent and well balanced, and which is consistent with the purpose and

principles of the San Francisco Charter must be our common goal.

In this context, I wish to stress the importance of achieving a better balance between the principal organs of the United Nations. The Security Council needs to be reformed in order to strengthen its legitimacy, representativeness, effectiveness, democracy and transparency. In considering its structure, we must correct the deficiencies in its present composition. It is not a matter of size; rather, the problem is the lack of balance in its representativeness. The Security Council must reflect the plurality and diversity of the membership of the United Nations, taking into account the profound changes in political geography experienced in the last decade.

Likewise, we must avoid repeating or even broadening existing inequalities. For this reason, Mexico is against increasing the number of permanent members. Let us not fall into the fallacy of believing that the Council's effectiveness resides in the right of veto. All rights bear responsibilities and these must not be abused. Otherwise, the necessary legitimacy which makes the Security Council efficient and effective is eroded. This is why I wish to reiterate our appeal to the permanent members to join in an open-minded way in designing a system to regulate the sphere of application of that privilege.

Nonetheless, we recognize that structural reform of the Security Council will not in itself guarantee its effectiveness. Hence, we insist on the need to progress towards a thorough revision of its working methods and of the decision-making process. The community of nations has given that organ the high responsibility of ensuring international peace and security. Under paragraph 1 of Article 24 of the Charter, the members of the Organization recognize that the Council acts in our name in carrying out these functions.

It is therefore clear that the Security Council's attitude must be profoundly democratic and one of respect towards the General Assembly, in accordance with paragraph 3 of the same Article. Anything else would be a violation of the letter and spirit of the Charter, and would mean an erosion of the Council's legitimacy and its capacity to fulfil the responsibilities that we have entrusted to it. We must break this vicious circle and make serious progress in the design and implementation of the needed reforms.

My country will continue to participate actively in the Working Group charged with reform of the Security Council. We hope to be able to submit to the Assembly recommendations that can receive widespread support, genuinely reflecting the collective aspirations of all the members of the United Nations.

Our concern about international security and the capacity of our multilateral forums to respond effectively to new challenges are compounded today by the uncertainty caused by the international financial crisis.

It is obvious that the Bretton Woods system has shown its inability to respond adequately to the challenges of the current international financial crisis. We are undoubtedly faced with a situation of high risk which threatens to erode the important development attainments of our emerging economies. Given the vicissitudes of the international financial situation, we, the countries of Latin America, have endeavoured to maintain our economic strength through profound and sometimes difficult processes of structural reform. We reaffirm our commitment to continue to manage in a responsible way the economic policy mechanisms that ensure our stability and growth.

It is clear that this is not enough and that concerted action is needed on the part of all countries and international financial organs. Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group meeting in Panama on 4-5 September urged the countries in which the financial crisis originated to adopt the measures needed to correct their imbalances. They made an appeal to the countries of the Group of 7 to immediately take the necessary measures to restore stability to financial markets and to ensure the growth of the world economy. The Rio Group also appealed to international financial institutions to be involved more quickly and effectively in finding solutions to the international financial crisis.

Overcoming the present situation must be our priority. We must be creative in order to find formulas that make it possible for us to avoid recurring financial crises and banish the spectre of global recession. Just as the community of nations has recognized the wisdom of preventive action to protect international peace and security, it is now necessary to take that same course in order to prevent cracks in the fabric of the world economy.

We must consider ways of implementing an early warning system that will allow us to detect financial crises in time and thus avoid their harmful effects. In the recent past, there have been warning signs which in

isolation were not identified as a prelude to more serious problems. We must collect such experiences, learn from them and prepare ourselves better for the future.

No country is free from responsibilities, just as no country is free of the effects of international financial imbalances. It is therefore up to us together and with a clear sense of direction to seek the proper mechanisms to respond early to signs that larger problems are imminent. In this universal forum, I reiterate our conviction that we must act resolutely in the short term. We need to define an agenda for international economic stability. We appeal to the Secretary-General so that, under his leadership and guidance, we can share experiences and proposals that will help us work toward global financial security.

By attaining that goal of preventive diplomacy, we will be contributing to the development and well-being of millions of persons who are victims of the financial uncertainty that today afflicts all economies, particularly those of a relatively lower level of development, and endangers the stability of all nations.

In the face of an uncertain political and economic panorama, the role of the United Nations takes on new relevance. Recent changes on the international scene yield unprecedented opportunities but at the same time present challenges for which there are no easy answers. We must act together in order to encourage the necessary consensus as that will allow us to take advantage of the benefits of globalization and confront its challenges.

We must fortify our individual and collective capacity in order to take advantage of the positive trends towards peace, stability, development and respect for law. Likewise, we must strengthen our ability to banish confrontation, violence, terror and inequality.

The United Nations is the necessary forum for facing international problems and finding solutions to them. As we reaffirm our commitment to the purposes of the San Francisco Charter, we shall continue to promote the participation of the United Nations in the definition of the parameters of international coexistence.

Address by The Honourable William Skate, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea.

The Honourable William Skate, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, His Excellency The Honourable William Skate, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Skate (Papua New Guinea): On behalf of the people and the Government of Papua New Guinea, I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to your important post. Your unanimous election as President of the General Assembly shows the esteem in which the international community holds both you, personally, and your country, Uruguay. The Papua New Guinea delegation is confident that you will guide this fifty-third session of the General Assembly to a successful conclusion.

May I also take this opportunity, through you, to express my delegation's sincere appreciation to your predecessor, the former Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for his outstanding stewardship in facilitating the work of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

We would also like to place on record our appreciation to the Secretary-General and the Secretariat staff for the care they put into the planning of the affairs of our Organization.

This is the first occasion on which I have addressed the General Assembly. The year since I was elected Prime Minister has been a year of great challenge in which my Government has been confronted with problems associated with natural disasters and those that have resulted from many years of neglect.

The realities of life in the rapidly shrinking world mean that a partnership must, in practice, be turned into something practical and viewed in a much broader global perspective as an element of a worldwide partnership in managing and, where possible, directing change.

The point is brought home by a series of natural disasters which have affected Papua New Guinea over the past year. First came the drought caused by the El Niño effect, and then followed frosts, which led to severe food shortages in many different parts of the country. Then came the tsunami which completely destroyed villages in the Aitape area of the Sandaun province on the north coast of the mainland, killing more than 2,100 people,

mainly children and women, and injuring many more. In between came floods and landslides, which caused death and destruction in several places. Meanwhile, people around Rabaul continue to cope with the effects and try to rebuild in the aftermath of the 1994 volcanic eruptions.

The drought, in particular, showed that people and States throughout the world have to be partners in dealing with the causes of disasters arising from climatic or other forms of environmental change. The prompt and generous response to the series of natural disasters by our neighbours and friends in many different countries showed that they are truly our partners in dealing with the effects of such changes.

Like other developing countries, Papua New Guinea faces the challenge of providing its people with opportunities to improve both the material standard of living and the quality of life. My Government has had to address these multiple changes while dealing with natural disasters and carrying out a comprehensive programme of structural adjustment.

In doing so, we are working hard to make sure that private initiative contributes to public welfare and national development, as it can and should, by focusing on trimming the public sector so that State resources are used where they can be most effective.

The result has been a stable economy with continuing economic growth. It has been achieved and is being maintained despite the negative impact on trade and investment prospects arising from the economic crisis affecting so many of our East Asian neighbours.

The lesson we draw from the experience is that the world is truly becoming a global community. The challenge we face is to develop a global partnership — strong, focused, and determined enough to manage and, where possible, to direct change. The lesson has obvious implications for a world in which some countries experience "aid fatigue", while increasing numbers of people elsewhere fall and remain below the poverty line, where survival itself is the most pressing issue.

I know that with its small, open economy, my country's development is directly influenced by developments in world markets for our products. Currently, my country is suffering from the economic crisis experienced by our major trading partners, in which we are forced to undertake significant reform programmes to protect our economy and our people.

In this regard, we turn our attention to international financial institutions to help us restructure our economy. Unfortunately, we have had mixed reactions from them. Some of them, including the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank, have been very positive in their discussions with us, while others appear to be slow in responding. This leads me to think that sometimes some of these organizations are insensitive and do not appreciate the difficulties and hardships faced by our people without their help.

This year, despite the El Niño drought and other natural disasters that devastated my country, Papua New Guinea, we have continued to become more vigilant to these challenges and to take remedial measures. Notwithstanding the hardship our economy is experiencing because of the international economic crisis, the value of our currency has consistently been recovering. For Papua New Guinea to realize and sustain its current reform programmes, it has to secure external financial support.

The challenge is to forge a new global partnership for change — a partnership in which both developed and developing countries join together to address the issues that the global community will face in the twenty-first century. This partnership will be necessary if the shared hopes of humanity for peace, justice and a better way of life are to progress.

I see my Government's foreign policy of partnership in the Asia-Pacific as a building block for the global partnership on which the future depends. For developing countries in particular, there is really no alternative way.

In facing the challenge of improving both the material standards of living and the quality of life of our people, we are carrying out comprehensive programmes of structural adjustment and changing our focus so that both private and State resources can be directed to social welfare and national development. Despite the negative effects of the current global crisis, we are achieving a stable economy, stabilizing our currency and attracting investments.

When my Government came into office in July 1997, my priority was the resolution of the nine-year-old Bougainville conflict, which had caused terrible suffering and the loss of lives and property. Three factors — the desire of the men and especially the women of Bougainville to end the fighting, my desire for a consensus resolution and the moral and practical support

of Australia and New Zealand — led to a meeting in Burnham, New Zealand, in October 1997 where a truce was signed.

As an integral part of the truce, my Government approached our friends in the region to form an unarmed and neutral regional Truce Monitoring Group. The Government of the Solomon Islands — which played a very constructive role in the processes — New Zealand, Australia, Fiji and Vanuatu provided personnel to the Truce Monitoring Group, and its presence helped mutual confidence-building and made people feel safe.

The peace monitoring group that took over on 1 May this year continues to provide a positive role in maintaining and consolidating peace. In March this year, I met in Lincoln, New Zealand, with the main Bougainvillean parties involved in the conflict, and we agreed that a permanent and irrevocable ceasefire should take effect from 30 April 1998. Proceeding on a bipartisan-national basis and in close consultation with all of the major Bougainville parties, I agreed that the State would approach the Security Council to endorse the Lincoln Agreement on Peace, Security and Development on Bougainville. I also requested that the Council send a small observer mission to monitor and report on developments.

As the internationally recognized representatives of all of the people of Papua New Guinea and being proud of Papua New Guinea's independence and sovereignty, we made these requests with mixed feelings, but with determination made strong by our faith in the cause of peace.

I am pleased to report that the Security Council responded positively to our request, and, through the efforts of other South Pacific Forum missions in New York and others in close cooperation with the Secretary-General, the Observer Mission is now on Bougainville, operating side by side with the personnel of the peacekeeping mission.

As I speak, my Government is making arrangements for a Bougainville restoration Government to take office within the framework of our Constitution before the end of this year. At the same time, the people and leaders of Bougainville are performing the traditional ceremonies of reconciliation.

Our partners from Australia, New Zealand, the European Union, Japan and the United Nations Development Programme are providing resources for restoration and development. A number of non-governmental organizations, including churches, the Red Cross and Doctors Without Frontiers are also active. My Government is taking practical steps to strengthen civil authority by training Bougainvillean policemen to work in Bougainville.

Having begun the processes of peace in Bougainville, we must now do everything we can to make peace work through peaceful means. While the peace process on Bougainville is still fragile, my Government is confident that with the support of all Papua New Guineans and of our neighbours and friends in the international community, it will continue to gain strength. As it gains strength, we expect direct international involvement to become of less importance, decreasing by agreement as mutual confidence and trust consolidates. The Bougainville peace process has shown in a practical and constructive manner how people can seek reconciliation and forgiveness.

The Security Council, together with the Secretary-General, have given both moral, and through the Observer Mission, visible and practical support.

On a separate though broadly related matter, Papua New Guinea commends the United Nations on 50 years of cooperation in international peacekeeping and reaffirms its commitment to these processes. Papua New Guinea makes a resolute commitment to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. In doing so, we recognize that like any other institution, the United Nations has limitations. Consistent with our view of the United Nations as a means of promoting global cooperation and partnership to meet the challenges of change in the twenty-first century, Papua New Guinea continues in its strong belief that its moral values and organizations offer hope to humanity.

Consistent with our commitment to the United Nations, my Government is actively engaged in bringing our national laws, policies and practices into line with the important declarations and plans of action produced by the United Nations. We give priority to implementing United Nations declarations and plans of action to advance the rights of women and the elimination of child abuse.

In common with the other Member countries, we believe that it is timely to bring the United Nations Charter into line with contemporary reality by eliminating references to "enemy States". Papua New Guinea

strongly supports calls for a new Security Council for the new millennium.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, we endorse the Declaration issued by its thirteenth Summit, held in Durban, South Africa.

The Security Council should be reformed and expanded. An effective Security Council should be of a size and composition which matches the enhanced role that the world expects it to play in coordinating global approaches and actions directed to deal with the issues we will all face in the twenty-first century. Consistent with the mutual respect and equity on which partnership must be based, Papua New Guinea believes that all permanent members of the Security Council should have similar privileges and rights.

Changing the world from a system of relations between imperial Powers to a partnership between sovereign States through decolonization is among the United Nations greatest achievements. The process will not be completed, as it must be, until the remaining 17 dependent territories have exercised their inalienable right to self-determination. Neither small size nor remoteness should be allowed to qualify or limit their rights. The recently concluded South Pacific Forum, held in Pohnpei in the Federated States of Micronesia, has confirmed its support for that right.

As one of the States which has always taken a close interest in the situation and in the rights of the indigenous Kanaks of New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea is pleased to note the progress made in implementing the Matignon Accords, culminating in the recent Agreement to the Noumea Accord.

The Noumea Accord will, we believe, provide a sound basis for the future fulfilment of all legitimate political aspirations. We urge all parties to honour both its letter and its spirit. The United Nations should continue to monitor developments in New Caledonia until implementation is complete and self-determination has been achieved.

More than 80 per cent of Papua New Guineans live in rural villages, where they depend directly on the land, rivers, lakes and sea for their livelihood. Our national Constitution commits us to use and develop the rich variety of the country's natural resources for the common good and the benefit of future generations. In doing so, it upholds the most up-to-date principles of international environmental law. The same provisions also provide a sound basis for domestic policy and law-making.

Papua New Guinea has spoken out strongly and worked actively on a wide range of environmental issues. Consistent with our record and ongoing commitment, my Government will shortly be signing and then ratifying the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In line with the importance we attach to such matters, Papua New Guinea is party to conventions arising out of the Rio Summit on environment and development and Agenda 21. My Government will continue to follow and support the future work of the Commission, including efforts to translate and integrate internationally agreed objectives and standards into domestic laws and programmes of action.

Like other members of the South Pacific Forum, Papua New Guinea is firmly committed to the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island States. We strongly urge its full implementation. Together with other States in the region, we have joined as partners with distant-water-fishing nations to develop a programme to manage the sustainable use of tuna stocks in the western and central Pacific.

The world's leading scientists have concluded that the rise in global temperatures poses serious threats, such as sea-level rise and an increase in natural catastrophes, such as the El Niño phenomenon.

Papua New Guinea, together with the small island States in the Pacific, will continue to stress the urgency for developed countries to take a strong lead in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Kyoto Protocol has paved the way for annex I countries to fulfil their commitments under the Convention on Climate Change and the Protocol itself. We urge those parties to translate their legally binding targets for the reduction of their emissions into concrete action. While it is our firm conviction that there must be a global approach, we cannot support shifting the burden to developing countries as a precondition for the ratification of the Protocol.

At the recent South Pacific Forum meeting, our Government, together with other heads of the South Pacific region, confirmed our support for the South Pacific Environmental Programme and the Forum

Fisheries Agency (FFA) as a key sector. The FFA programme will ensure the maintenance of sustainable fisheries in the region as well as enhance the economic security of coastal States, particularly those economies which are highly dependent on this one resource.

This is the International Year of the Ocean. Papua New Guinea will work actively with other South Pacific Missions in New York to commemorate this Year, with particular emphasis on the sustainable use of resources derived from the oceans.

With its recent share of national disasters, some of which have taken the ultimate human toll, Papua New Guinea is concerned about climate change, rising sea levels and the urgent need to reduce carbon and other emissions in the atmosphere. Having experienced natural disasters at first hand, I would say that the greatest challenge for the United Nations is to strengthen the global community's capacity to respond promptly and effectively to natural disasters. I am sure that my friends from China and Bangladesh, where large areas have recently been devastated by floods, would agree. Papua New Guinea strongly supports the renewal of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and preparedness and the Yokohama Strategy adopted in 1993.

Consistent with our shared commitment to a stable, peaceful and environmentally safe world, my Government supports the objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We support efforts to ban transboundary movements of radioactive and other hazardous wastes in and through our region and to ensure that damage arising from nuclear explosions is adequately compensated.

Together with our partners in the South Pacific Forum, we recently reaffirmed our determination to maintain the South Pacific as a nuclear-free zone. We also expressed our support for the other regional nuclear-free zones, in Africa, South-East Asia and the Latin American and Caribbean region, and the proposed new initiative in Central and South Asia. Like people and Governments throughout the world, we in the South Pacific were seriously concerned about the series of nuclear weapons tests conducted by India and Pakistan. The best course of action would be not only to stop testing now but also to destroy all nuclear weapons. Papua New Guinea believes that the same should apply to all weapons of mass destruction in other parts of the world.

Encouraged at the positive signs of progress towards resolving conflicts and securing peace in several areas of tension and concern in Asia and Africa, Papua New Guinea nonetheless remains anxious over recent developments affecting Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea and Ethiopia. We are heartened by the efforts made by the Organization of African Unity to restore peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. Also, we support the initiative of President Nelson Mandela of South Africa to revive a common vision for peace in Africa.

Consistent with our commitment to peaceful dialogue between nations, Papua New Guinea condemns those who employ terrorism against innocent people, including women and children. Diplomacy is the means by which States join together as partners and cooperate in bringing about changes to promote peace, development and justice for people both in principle and, even more importantly, in practice. It is therefore vital that diplomats be able to live and work safely, free from the threat of terrorism, such as that practised against American diplomats in Africa.

In this connection, following recent events on our common border with Indonesia, my Government would like to make clear its strong and consistent recognition of the sovereignty of Indonesia, including Irian Jaya, and the continuing mutual respect in all aspects of our relationship.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Papua New Guinea's commitments to the United Nations Charter; to the inalienable rights of the independent territories to self-determination, noting the Matignon and Noumea accords for the Kanak people of New Caledonia; the declaration to advance the rights of women and eliminate child abuse; to our determination to maintain global natural disaster preparedness; to work actively in commemorating the Year of the Ocean; to the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol on global warming; and to the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island States.

Partnership in promoting change is the key to addressing the challenges that the world will face in the twenty-first century. I believe the challenge for the Member States is to join together to change this Organization for the better so that it will serve as an effective basis for partnership, to address and resolve the issues that lie ahead.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable William Skate, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Keizo Obuchi, Prime Minister of Japan

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Japan.

Mr. Keizo Obuchi, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I take great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Keizo Obuchi, Prime Minister of Japan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Obuchi (Japan) (*spoke in Japanese; interpretation furnished by the delegation*): I should like to extend my most sincere compliments to you, Sir, Foreign Minister of Uruguay, on your assumption of office as President of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. I should also like to express my respects to Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, Deputy of the Supreme Rada of Ukraine, for all his efforts during his tenure as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

How should we build the framework for a new international order in the twenty-first century? This is the question that our international community is facing amidst new situations that were created in the aftermath of the collapse of the cold war, almost a decade ago. That collapse provided an opportunity to establish a harmonious order based upon the cooperation of the entire international community, rather than the maintenance of peace by a military balance between two super-Powers. However, our international community today is troubled with frequent regional conflicts and challenged by the inseparably connected problem of poverty. Creating a new system to cope effectively with such challenges is the greatest agenda for our international community today. To achieve this objective, we must simultaneously promote three issues: peace and development, which are two sides of the same coin, plus United Nations reforms, which are indispensable in our efforts to achieve the first two.

Today, the possibility of a world-wide conflict has decreased in comparison to the cold-war era, but conflicts arising from such causes as ethnic and religious confrontation are increasing. In dealing with these conflicts, it is more important to focus on how to prevent them rather than on how to solve them once they break out. In this regard, we must first consider the essential issues of arms control and disarmament. The recent nuclear tests of India and Pakistan constitute enormous challenges to the non-proliferation regime. We urgently need to find a way to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and to strengthen the non-proliferation regime. Furthermore, it is necessary to deal not only with the weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, but also with such conventional weapons as small arms and anti-personnel landmines.

Social instabilities lie at the root of conflicts. This makes it extremely important to deal with development issues. There are also growing global threats, such as environmental destruction and terrorism. The cruel destructive power of terrorism especially threatens the lives and safety of citizens. It is different by nature from conventional armed conflict between nations, but in the post-cold-war world it poses increasingly grave concerns to our security. Our international community should seriously consider ways to effectively cope with these problems and threats.

Today, based on such thinking, I should like to discuss these issues from the perspectives of peace and development and of reform, which is indispensable in promoting the first two. In so doing, I want to elaborate on our thinking and express our determination to play a leading role in fulfilling our responsibilities.

I should first like to talk about nuclear non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament, which are essential to maintaining peace. In May this year, India and Pakistan conducted, to our deepest regret, a series of nuclear tests, which are formidable challenges to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. In seeking a world free of nuclear weapons, it is indispensable that we allow no further proliferation and secure a solid basis for the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The existing format certainly is not perfect, but there is no feasible, realistic alternative if we are to ensure stability in our international community. No country should be allowed to attempt to set back international efforts towards strengthening the non-proliferation regime. At the same time, to improve the effectiveness of this regime, it is

important, together with the efforts by all nations to maintain non-proliferation, to see sincere implementation of nuclear disarmament by nuclear-weapon States. Based on this thinking, we regard the following five points as important.

First, the nuclear non-proliferation regime should become more universal. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) sets the structure for international control of nuclear weapons, with no alternative, and we strongly urge non-parties to accede to this Treaty promptly and without condition. In this context, we highly appreciate Brazil's accession to the NPT in August this year.

Secondly, in order to complement the NPT and ensure nuclear non-proliferation, I should like to underline the need to place strict export controls on equipment, materials and technologies that relate to nuclear weapons and missiles. We urge every nation to engage in serious efforts to prevent any transfer of such materials and technologies.

Thirdly, we must prevent any further nuclear testing. Without universal support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the effectiveness of the nuclear non-proliferation system cannot be maintained. I should like to call on nations that have not yet done so to promptly become parties to this Treaty so as to realize its early effectuation. In the meantime, we should take necessary steps to assure the cessation of nuclear testing.

Fourthly, further advancement of nuclear disarmament by nuclear-weapon States is more important than ever in maintaining and strengthening various efforts for nuclear non-proliferation. We hope to see early effectuation of START II and an early launching of negotiations on START III. Also, we welcome such actions as the decision by the British Government in July this year for a significant reduction of their nuclear arsenals, as well as France's decision to dismantle its ground-to-ground missiles. We urge all the nuclear-weapon States to implement sincerely their obligations under article 6 of the NPT, thereby promoting nuclear disarmament even further.

Fifthly, to put a cap on nuclear-weapons capability, each nation must positively participate in and reach an early conclusion of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

During this session of the General Assembly, Japan will take initiatives to promote these five objectives.

Needless to say, the promotion of arms control and disarmament should not be limited to the area of nuclear weapons. Dealing with other weapons of mass destruction, such as biological and chemical weapons, as well as delivery vehicles, such as missiles, is of high importance. The recent missile launch by North Korea, even if it was an attempt to launch a satellite into orbit, poses a serious problem which directly concerns both Japan's national security and peace and stability in North-East Asia. It also constitutes a challenge to our efforts to prevent the proliferation of delivery vehicles of weapons of mass destruction. I renew my call for North Korea to consider seriously the 15 September statement by the President of the Security Council as a message reflecting the views of the entire international community, and to never repeat such an act.

Furthermore, to prevent the outbreak and escalation of conflicts, we also need to address the problems of anti-personnel landmines and small arms, including automatic rifles, regarding which we have yet to make sufficient efforts. We intend to continue to play a leading role on these issues. In particular, in the area of anti-personnel landmines we will endeavour to strengthen international cooperation towards early realization of the "zero victim" objective, by supporting assistance for victims and the elimination of landmines. We are pleased that 40 countries have now ratified the Convention banning anti-personnel landmines and that it will enter into force on 1 March next year. We are now making efforts for Japan's earliest possible ratification of this Convention. We ask other nations yet to ratify it to do so promptly, so that it may become a universal framework to ban anti-personnel landmines totally.

Conflicts give rise to intolerable crimes against humanity, such as genocide. To deter such crimes, it is necessary to establish a permanent international court that punishes such acts as international crimes. Adoption of the agreement in July this year in Rome to establish such a court was an act of historic significance. Japan believes that the blessing and cooperation of the entire international community is indispensable if the court is to produce effective results. That is why we took important initiatives at the Diplomatic Conference. It is our hope that the International Criminal Court will continue to grow and become a universal framework.

In our efforts towards peace, with civilian staff assuming an increasing role in United Nations activities, including peacekeeping, we observe with regret an increasing number of cases where non-combatants

become the targets of violence by belligerents. In July this year, a staff member from Japan, together with staff members from Poland, Tajikistan and Uruguay, fell victim to a despicable criminal act directed at the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan. The countries concerned and the United Nations need to seriously examine ways to ensure the security of United Nations personnel and of relevant humanitarian-assistance organizations. In this regard, we reiterate our call upon nations that have not yet done so to join the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, adopted in December 1994, so that it may come into force as soon as possible. At the same time, Japan will also make contributions of about $1 million to the United Nations to support security measures for United Nations personnel. We hope many other countries will also make contributions to support United Nations efforts in this field.

Some of the basic causes of conflicts are problems of economic and social development. We must pay close attention to them. During the Tokyo International Conference on Preventive Strategy, which Japan hosted this January, participants underlined the importance of a comprehensive approach in dealing with such problems by coming to grips with various causes of them, including poverty.

The development issue is the greatest challenge the world will face in the twenty-first century. In addressing this issue, we have to deal not only with the economic-development problems of the developing countries, but also with the social sides of development, such as human rights and good governance.

Japan has been advocating a new development strategy that contains such ideas. We are pleased that the concept was endorsed in 1996 at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and has been gaining support in the United Nations. This strategy is based on the philosophy that the international community should make no distinction between donor countries and recipient countries and should tackle the problems of development as a common issue for all. In this regard, this strategy attaches great importance to developing countries' playing an active and responsible role in their own development. It also emphasizes positive cooperation based on partnership without distinction between developing and developed countries. These are the guiding principles of the new development strategy.

On the basis of these principles, the Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II) will be held in Japan this October as a follow-up to the first Conference, held in 1993. Its objective is to seek a path to promote the new development strategy in Africa so as to support African countries' own nation-building efforts. In this regard, we aim to draw up an agenda for action.

Japan also has been making the greatest contributions possible to the stable development of Asia. In the present financial and economic crisis we have taken initiatives to implement measures of support totalling about $43 billion to Asian countries, which is the largest single contribution by any nation in the world. Simultaneously, Japan is making every possible effort, through such measures as stabilizing our financial system, to put our own economy on a recovery track within the next year or two. We believe that the early recovery of our own economy is the best contribution we can make to the economies of Asia and of the world. We hope strongly that the coming conference, TICAD II, will benefit from such Asian experiences and provide a good opportunity to use the wisdom and power of the entire international community to assist the development of the African continent.

In the post-cold-war transformation of international relations, Japan is actively promoting what we call Eurasian diplomacy. This means redefining relations with countries of the Eurasian continent, including the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea and countries in the Silk Road regions of Central Asia and the Caucasus range. This is another example of Japan's policy of promoting peace and development in tandem.

In today's world, problems that directly threaten people's daily lives across national borders are becoming increasingly serious. These include environmental destruction, overpopulation, human rights violations, the exodus of refugees, terrorism, drug-trafficking, international organized crime and global diseases such as AIDS. To cope with these problems, our international community must be united under the concept of protecting the security and dignity of mankind from global threats. Furthermore, citizens, along with Governments, must get together to engage in common undertakings, such as making common rules. In particular, as we mark the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I should like to point out that efforts against large-scale human rights violations and efforts to ease refugee

problems arising from conflicts are also indispensable for preventing conflicts.

In addressing issues of peace and development, there is an urgent need to reform the United Nations and to strengthen its functions. Peace and development are two sides of the same coin. At the same time, if the United Nations is to respond effectively to various problems that our international community shoulders, we urgently need to do our best to assure a healthy financial basis. This includes each Member State's sincere implementation of its obligation to pay its assessed contribution. Japan's assessment will be over 20 per cent, exceeding the sum of that of four permanent members of the Security Council, not including the United States. In this situation, reform in the financial area requires serious attention. In reforming the United Nations to strengthen its functioning, we must promote reforms in three interrelated areas in a balanced manner: reform in the political area, the development area, and the financial area, which supports political and development activities.

It is regrettable that even though the chances of materializing reforms increased during last year's General Assembly session, discussions on the reform of the Security Council have not developed since then. Under the circumstances facing the international community I mentioned earlier, reforming the Security Council to reinforce its legitimacy and effectiveness is an urgent task. Japan, with the endorsement of many countries, is prepared to assume greater responsibilities as a permanent member of the Security Council. This would be in accordance with our basic philosophy of non-resort to the use of force prohibited by our Constitution. We are now in the fifth year since the concrete discussions on the reform of the Security Council started. Points of argument have been exhausted. We are now at a stage where each country should make a political decision. Japan believes that we are able to agree on a package that responds to the interests of the entire international community and to the legitimate concerns of the majority of countries. If we do not have the will to decide and act in order to achieve an agreement on such a package, we will not be able to respond effectively to challenges the international community will face in the coming century. Japan strongly urges all countries to make a bold political decision for the strengthening of the United Nations so that we may reach an agreement on the framework of the reform during the present session of the General Assembly.

The twenty-first century is just around the corner. It is our duty to preserve and develop the heritage of mankind in the coming century. The late professor, Mr. Yutaka Akino, who gave his life during his mission of peacekeeping in Tajikistan, was one of my close friends. He had the following motto: do not be pushed around by events; take action. Along the same lines, the United Nations should make action a top priority and become a strong Organization equipped with both effectiveness and credibility, squarely tackling all problems. We the Member States should make utmost efforts to achieve it, so that the United Nations can enter the twenty-first century as such an Organization. The future of the United Nations is in the hands of the Member States. My guiding principle in Japan's policy management is to be sincere, to be steady and to be courageously prompt. I therefore should like to conclude my remarks by emphasizing my resolution to take leadership in addressing issues of peace, development and reform in a sincere, steady and courageously prompt manner.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Japan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Keizo Obuchi, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of the Argentine Republic, His Excellency Mr. Guido di Tella.

Mr. Di Tella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. Secondly, allow me to express the profound regard and warm ties that unite Argentina and Uruguay, an ongoing relationship that was already under way at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

We also extend our appreciation to Ambassador Udovenko for the courage, balance and impartiality he exhibited during the course of his mandate.

In a globalized world, peace and security, economic stability and growth are more than ever indissolubly linked. The economic and financial crisis that concerns us today should boost our commitment to the economic reform process which we are carrying out in our region. Trade and foreign investment are clearly sources of opportunity and incentives to growth and competitiveness. But it is also clear that in recent decades the free

movement of capital flows has been one of the main engines of economic development for many countries.

In order to dispel its negative effects, globalization requires educational, social and environmental policies that benefit all of society in a balanced and equitable manner. We feel it is damaging to succumb to the temptation of imposing restrictions on international trade in order to thwart the spread of economic crisis, or to resort to hampering or placing conditions on the flow of financial resources in order to moderate their volatility.

In Latin America, countries such as Argentina have made sustained and coherent efforts to consolidate their financial situation, contain the budget deficit and provide assurances to foreign investment by helping to create a solid economic environment for the region, which is increasingly being seen with new eyes.

A few days ago, the Presidents of the Rio Group, meeting in Panama, expressed their resolve to continue managing economic policy mechanisms in a responsible manner that guarantees stability and growth. Accordingly, financial institutions and those countries with the capacity to provide assistance should understand the problems that this critical economic situation presents to countries that find themselves in the eye of the storm and act accordingly.

The Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) is today a model of economic foundations based on freedom and democracy in which cooperation is the very essence of the system.

As an illustration of the excellent relations in the area of security and defense, Argentina pressed for the adoption of the Political Declaration of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile as a Zone of Peace, which was signed at the MERCOSUR summit held in Argentina on 24 July 1998.

The recent nuclear tests in South Asia constituted a step backwards with regard to regional and global security. These tests delay the economic development and well-being of the population. Argentina, together with countries that have renounced the military use of nuclear technology, has urged the States of that region to stop conducting tests and to adhere to the international instruments in force. Argentina, for its part, has offered to share fully its experience in peaceful nuclear cooperation. Allow me to recall that Argentina was the first country that, having mastered the nuclear fuel cycle, chose to limit its own use of this technology.

We feel proud of the steps our country has taken in the last decade related to non-proliferation issues. In the nuclear field, we ratified the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco) in 1994 and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1995, and have become a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

In the chemical and bacteriological field, we have promoted the Joint Declaration on the Complete Prohibition of Chemical and Biological Weapons — the Mendoza Agreement — of 1991, a commitment originally limited to Argentina, Brazil and Chile, which was later extended to most Latin American countries. We have also adjusted our domestic legislation strictly to control exports related to dual-use chemical, bacteriological and missile-related substances and technologies, in accordance with existing international instruments. Last July, as a follow-up to the Mendoza Agreement, we adopted the Ushuaia Declaration, which established the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) as an area free of weapons of mass destruction. Hence, Argentina has taken the decision to assume greater responsibility in this field. In turn, this decision has allowed us to continue exchanges of advanced technology.

In relation to conventional weapons, we strongly support the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, to which we regularly provide information. We also support other important initiatives recently adopted within the framework of the Organization of American States (OAS), such as the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials and Other Appropriate Actions. Small arms constitute another source of international concern. It is worth mentioning that regional and international seminars have recently been held in Buenos Aires on this topic.

We are not indifferent to the grave scourge of antipersonnel mines. In 1995, Argentina established a moratorium on the export of mines and more recently, in December 1997 at Ottawa, I had the honour to sign, on my country's behalf, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

In our hemisphere we work earnestly and in a spirit of compromise to overcome all differences by means of negotiation. As we gradually resolve the few pending bilateral disputes, we will definitively consolidate our region as a zone of peace. We trust that in coming

months we shall see important developments in that regard. Friendship among peoples is the best guarantee against conflict.

We are convinced that the United Nations presence in Haiti, in keeping with the desire of the Government of that country, will help to consolidate democracy and contribute to the prosperity of the Haitian people.

The resurgence of terrorist attacks comes as a harsh reminder that no State is immune to terrorism. My country firmly supports the initiatives under way to supplement with new conventions the network of anti-terrorism norms now in force, leading to enhanced international cooperation and to establishing the obligation of all States to bring to justice and punish those responsible for these acts. The Argentine Government continues to make every effort to clarify the acts of terrorism committed against the Israeli embassy and the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association in Buenos Aires.

Let me highlight the fact that on 2 September 1998 the Argentine Republic signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings. Likewise, next November Argentina will host the second specialized inter-American conference on terrorism.

Severe global humanitarian crises, usually accompanied by forced displacement of populations, constitute another issue that affects international peace and security. Argentina has joined in the international community's efforts, with bilateral assistance programmes and with such initiatives as the "White Helmets" initiative. In that context, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations devoting their energies to the solution of this type of crisis deserve our recognition.

To grow and develop, peoples need to live in peace. We are dismayed to see that conflicts which could be overcome, such as those in Cyprus, the Middle East, the Great Lakes region of Africa, Angola and the Balkans, particularly Kosovo, persist in spite of the international community's efforts to resolve them. The situation of refugees, especially children, who are victims of these conflicts is a source of particular concern.

In 1998 Argentina will mark the fortieth anniversary of its participation in peacekeeping operations. Our contribution has cost the lives of Argentine citizens who helped to make this a more secure and stable world. The vast experience acquired over these 40 years has been embodied in the Argentine joint training centre for peacekeeping operations, and in the Argentine gendarmerie training centre that specializes in civilian police operations abroad.

Argentina's natural interest in the South Atlantic is reflected in our participation in the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic, which brings together 24 African and Latin American countries from both shores of the Atlantic. I am particularly proud to announce that, on 21 and 22 October, Argentina will be the site of the fifth Ministerial Meeting of the countries members of the Zone.

Unfortunately, there remains an important unresolved issue in the South Atlantic: the sovereignty dispute between the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland over the Malvinas Islands, a dispute whose existence has been unequivocally recognized in many resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, as well as in various other international forums. I reiterate, with the same conviction as always, the legitimate and well-founded rights of Argentina in that long-standing dispute. And, with the same conviction as always, I urge the United Kingdom to heed the call of the international community and observe United Nations resolutions calling upon both Governments to resume negotiations on all aspects of this question.

The end of the cold war showed us that far more complicated problems have been resolved through frank, open dialogue and with a determination to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. I see no reason why the question of the Malvinas Islands should be an exception. Proceeding on firm footing, we have rebuilt our bilateral relationship and, for the benefit of the Argentine and British peoples, have strengthened political, trade and cultural ties. Evidence of this is the visit which President Carlos Menem is to make to the United Kingdom in the near future, for which both parties are engaged in enthusiastic preparations and which has generated high expectations at all levels.

Similarly, we have left behind the misgivings and resentments of the past, learning from our mistakes and creating a climate of mutual trust in the South-West Atlantic, which is today enabling us to cooperate in the conservation of fishery resources and in exploration for hydrocarbons. That cooperation renders still more

incomprehensible today's lack of communication between the islands and the mainland. There are few places in the world with such an unnatural situation. It is beyond doubt that restoring direct ties between the mainland and the islands would contribute to resolving the problem. We have no doubt about this.

Once again, I expressly reiterate Argentina's sincere desire to pursue a frank dialogue without preconditions. We hope that the British Government understands the full meaning of our offer and that it will respond accordingly. To the islanders I reiterate our unwavering commitment to full and unconditional respect for their way of life, their culture and their institutions. Our national constitution so provides, and that is the desire of the Argentine people.

There have been concrete advances on vital questions. The creation of a permanent international criminal court is one such example. Similarly, the recent special session of the General Assembly devoted to the world problem of drugs adopted innovative documents of great importance.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. In these 50 years, the international community has become aware of the vital importance of human rights: today it no longer accepts what was once tolerated.

The deterioration of the environment, in its various forms, is one of the problems urgently requiring concrete answers and effective commitment by governments and civil society. Argentina will have the honour of hosting the fourth Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, from 2 to 13 November of this year.

We are convinced that a substantial part of our efforts to reform the Organization should be geared to designing a mechanism of closer and more effective cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions.

With regard to reform of the Security Council, we believe that situations born out of the Second World War cannot prevail indefinitely. It is necessary to find democratic solutions that will allow for periodic renewal within the modalities preferred by each region. The viability of this reform will necessarily depend on the degree of consensus reached. There are several aspects to be borne in mind. The first is that the reform must be legally valid, which means not forcing interpretations of the Charter with regard to the majorities required by Article 108. Further, the reform must be founded on political legitimacy. Any increase in the number of permanent members should allow for a rotation open to all States of the respective regions. The crisis of our Organization is fundamentally one of participation. Many small and medium-sized countries feel excluded. Only by allowing greater participation in the Security Council will we be living up to the democratic ideals of the end of this century.

The vitality of democratic ideals in the region was confirmed with the signing on 24 July of the Ushuaia protocol, which reaffirms the democratic clause in the countries of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), Bolivia and Chile.

The visit by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to the countries of our region last July was a very significant event. Argentina had the opportunity to demonstrate its clear commitment to assuming its global responsibilities. The Secretary-General recognized this, especially as regards peacekeeping.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, His Excellency Mr. Ali Alatas.

Mr. Alatas (Indonesia): It gives me great pleasure, Sir, to extend to you my congratulations and those of the Indonesian delegation on your election to the presidency of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. I should like to assure you of our full cooperation in the discharge of your duties.

To your distinguished predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, I wish to convey our felicitations for having so ably guided the fifty-second session to a successful conclusion.

Let me also take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his dedication to the reform and restructuring of the Organization, as well as for his determined efforts to seek a peaceful solution to conflict situations in various parts of the world.

One of the great ironies of our time is that at the end of a century in which the amazing advances of science and technology could have been harnessed to effectively address the problem of poverty, scores of millions more people have slipped below the poverty line.

At the same time, there has been a massive application of science and technology to increase humankind's capacity to deal out death and destruction. Even in the best of times, humankind's use of economic resources has not been marked by any deep sense of responsibility but rather by mindless consumption that has often led to the degradation of our environment. Unfortunately squandering resources is an old habit of the human race.

Mr. Filali (Morocco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Today, I fear that the awesome force of globalization, itself propelled by science and technology, is also being squandered: instead of serving to unify humankind in a decisive assault against the persistent systemic problems of our time, it is being used to press the advantage of the strong over the weak, thereby widening the gap between the developed and developing world.

Herein lies the tragedy of the human race: that our vast capacity to alter the planet on which we live has been matched to a parochial vision. Large and complex actions are motivated by narrow self-interest. And in the narrowness of our perspective we inflict great harm on one another. That is why the imbalances and inequities in international relations persist: we can never get rid of them until we attain that essential balance within ourselves, between the scope of our actions and that of our intentions.

Yet I do not despair. Against the backdrop of a century of conflict, one human achievement shines: the founding of the United Nations. It is admittedly a flawed achievement, for after five decades it has not yet brought us the global peace that we envisaged to be its greatest promise. But it has spared us from the horrors of another world war and possibly from a nuclear holocaust. That this flawed jewel of human reason should remain to serve us in a more effective way in the next century is an imperative. Through its instrumentality, it is still possible for us to tame the dogs of war and to exorcise the spectre of poverty. Through its processes of consultation and debate, we can still attain a broadness of mind that matches the global sweep of our actions. Through the habits of cooperation and trust that it engenders among its Members and among the countless individuals and institutions that participate in its dialogues, we might yet realize our shared vision of a global civil society. But first it must be reformed, further democratized and fully empowered.

The United Nations, as the central mechanism and catalyst for multilateral cooperation, must be enabled to play its mandated role in the achievement and maintenance of peace, security and development. It is therefore of the greatest importance that it be provided with the resources with which to carry on its work instead of being strapped for funds as it is now. The legal obligation of every Member State in that regard must therefore be strictly met.

It is also essential that the ongoing process of reform of the United Nations be intensified, particularly with regard to the Security Council, taking into account the desire of all States from all regions to participate in its work, as well as present political, economic and demographic realities. For indeed, developing countries are grossly under-represented on the Council especially at a time when its work is focused on conflict situations in the developing world. This anomaly has to be redressed by an increase in the representation of the developing world in the permanent as well as in the non-permanent membership of the Council. The legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness of the Council's work depend on its representative character. Indonesia views the task of Security Council reform as a matter of urgency, but we must not be rushed into any hasty or ill-advised decisions that would be detrimental to the long-term interests of Member States. In this context, there is a need to continue and accelerate the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council.

If the cause of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, has not made substantive progress in recent years, it is largely because there are States that believe they have much to gain by their exclusive possession of nuclear arms. The unjustifiable privileges conferred on the nuclear-weapon States have given rise to a regime of discrimination and hypocrisy as well as a situation where non-nuclear countries wishing to enjoy the same privileges seek to become nuclear States themselves. Thus, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has not fully met its objectives, and the imbalances and discrimination inherent to it have persisted. Regrettably, too, the second Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference failed to agree on substantive issues. Still, we must persevere and prepare ourselves for the next NPT Review Conference and focus on the inequities and imbalances inherent in the Treaty. At the same time, we urge the nuclear-weapon States to implement faithfully both the letter and spirit of agreements relating to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. We call on all States to refrain from

developing these weapons so that we may the sooner attain our ultimate objective of their total elimination.

The slow pace of progress towards non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament compels us to work even harder to achieve global disarmament objectives. The convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament is essential for providing new political momentum that would enable and encourage the Governments and peoples of the world to move towards disarmament, including the elimination of nuclear weapons. It is therefore imperative that we take further concrete steps leading to the convening of the fourth special session.

While disarmament marks time, discord is rampant in the form of armed conflicts, disputes and tensions between and within States in many parts of the globe. The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains a source of continuing concern for Indonesia. Hence, we reaffirm our steadfast support for the full, impartial and effective implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. In Afghanistan, we call on the warring factions to cease hostilities and to start constructive dialogue. The protracted civil strife in that country also threatens to spill over beyond its borders. We urge the parties concerned to cooperate with the United Nations in its concerted endeavours to restore peace and stability in the region. The dire situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo calls for continued and concerted efforts in restoring peace and tranquillity.

Indonesia is appalled by the terrorist bomb attacks on the American embassies in the capitals of Kenya and Tanzania that caused the death of nearly 200 people and the wounding of thousands. We reiterate our condemnation of all acts and forms of terrorism wherever they may occur and whoever perpetrates them. At the same time, we stress that we will never condone the resort to unilateral acts of aggression and violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States as a means to combat terrorism. We therefore urge all States to enhance international cooperation in the fight against terrorism while strictly observing and implementing the relevant international instruments.

My delegation welcomes the recent positive developments concerning the Lockerbie incident that culminated in the adoption of Security Council resolution 1192 (1998). It is our hope that discussions will now take place between the United Kingdom, the United States and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, including on the appropriate trial arrangements. Early implementation of this resolution will hopefully lead to a definitive settlement of this issue and the lifting of sanctions imposed on Libya.

In the Middle East, the situation in the occupied territories keeps deteriorating as the peace process remains in the grip of a stalemate. Israeli policies and practices of oppression and provocation have continued unabated. In a blatant attempt to change the demography of the occupied territories, Israel keeps building new settlements and expanding existing ones. More ominously, it has arbitrarily extended the administrative powers of the occupying authorities in Jerusalem beyond the city's borders in a bid to consolidate Israel's hold on East Jerusalem and the West Bank and thereby entrench Jerusalem as its capital. This would pre-empt negotiations on the status of the Holy City and threaten to unravel the peace process, with grave repercussions not only for the Middle East but also beyond.

Peace and stability will continue to elude the region until Israel complies with its treaty obligations and unconditionally withdraws from all occupied Arab territories in accordance with all relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). The peace process must be resumed and agreements reached must be implemented in their entirety and not selectively or conditionally.

In South-East Asia, the elections held recently in Cambodia, deemed to have been generally free and fair by international observers, should now lead to the restoration of normalcy in the country. It is time that all the parties in Cambodia resolve their differences in the spirit of national reconciliation and unity in the larger interest of their country, work together toward the formation of a new government and thereby contribute to peace and stability in South-East Asia.

The world economy is teetering on the brink of recession, if not already experiencing one. Economic output has slowed for the developed and developing countries alike, and growth in world trade has also decelerated. While official forecasts indicate a slowdown in the growth of world output to 2.5 per cent, any such forecasts may still be too optimistic. Only a little more than a year ago, the world economy was on a significant growth path, and the outlook was generally bright. In Asia, robust growth for decades had transformed much of the region into an economic powerhouse. Today, many of those dynamic economies are crippled. One third of the world is grappling with serious economic slowdown and the frightening possibility of a depression.

In the affected countries, including Indonesia, economic turmoil has reached a devastating level, pushing their economies into recession and their people to the very edge of their endurance. Unemployment has soared, and an unacceptable number of people have slipped under the poverty line. Education has been severely affected, and food is in short supply. The experience of South-East Asian countries in this financial turmoil has shown that even the most dynamic economies are vulnerable. In spite of the judicious macroeconomic policies that they adopted and the often painful structural adjustments that they carried out, the development gains they earned over the decades crumbled in the span of a few weeks. The lesson of this debacle is that the market is driven by sentiments as much as fundamentals, by perception rather than facts alone.

These adverse aspects of globalization have furthermore greatly eroded multilateral cooperation for development. The concept of development as a special part of a multilateral support system has been largely replaced by the laissez-faire approach to the globalized economy. This has resulted, *inter alia*, in sharply contracted financial resources for development for the majority of the developing countries, particularly the least developed countries. External indebtedness has escalated, and protectionism in international trade has risen significantly as more and more countries have become inward-looking in this era of globalization.

This dire situation will certainly impact on the implementation of the commitments agreed upon at the recent major global conferences, including in the fields of environment and development, social development, population and development, women and development, habitat and food. It is therefore a matter of great concern to all of us that the achievement of sustainable human development will be further removed from reality.

I believe that our troubles are less the result of the vagaries of globalization than the consequence of an economic doctrine that has dominated international economic relations for many years now. This doctrine presents unbridled liberalization as a panacea for all economies, developed and developing. In their desire to integrate themselves with the global economy, many developing countries have audaciously opened up their economies, only to realize that the social and political costs of doing so often outstrip the benefits. Moreover, the inordinate emphasis on unfettered markets has led to the neglect of such development issues as international cooperation for development, the need for non-commercial financial flows and the necessity of differential treatment for developing countries. Thus, the international agenda has been governed by the interests of the developed countries in opening up opportunities for foreign investments, private capital flows — that often turn out to be merely speculative — and the export of their manufactures.

In the face of such stark global realities, we must intensify international solidarity and cooperation. The international community should strengthen its management role in the world economy, in particular in the monetary and financial fields, including the establishment of surveillance and regulatory frameworks for short-term capital flows and trade in currencies, without constraining the liberalization of economies. This strengthened international management role is essential if we seek to avert future crises, alleviate the adverse impact of globalization and maximize its benefits.

We should therefore seriously consider various initiatives for enhancing global financial and monetary cooperation. The proposed United Nations conference on financing for development would provide an opportunity to explore various options towards financial stability and development. It is also encouraging that the two-day high-level dialogue of the General Assembly last week contributed to increased awareness and understanding of the economic and social impact of globalization and the need for international cooperation in addressing that issue.

Another important proposal is the one made by the Non-Aligned Movement for an international conference on money and finance for development in order to pursue comprehensive reform of the existing international monetary and financial system.

Because we want the North-South dialogue to proceed in earnest, we should broaden and intensify South-South cooperation. Decades of development efforts have greatly increased the economic complementarities among developing countries. We must tap these complementarities and strengthen partnership in the South. In this effort, our developed-country partners and international institutions can play a valuable role by participating in tripartite arrangements. In this regard, a number of steps to promote South-South cooperation have been initiated, including a high-level meeting on regional and subregional cooperation, which will be held in Bali, Indonesia, this coming December. The commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action on South-South cooperation

will be held at a special one-day meeting in the General Assembly. Of great importance is the Group of 77 initiative on a South summit to be held prior to the Millennium Assembly, in the year 2000.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was proclaimed as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. To us in Indonesia who are now in the midst of formulating and initiating far-reaching economic, social and political reforms, this is a particularly significant occasion. In fact, in line with our commitment to the Vienna Declaration, we have just launched a National Plan of Action on Human Rights aimed at infusing the various segments of society and of the Government, including the national security apparatus, with values conducive to the promotion and protection of human rights. We expect to sign and ratify in the near future several more United Nations conventions on human rights.

The reform-development Government that is now in place in Indonesia will carry out vigorous measures to further democratize our national life. For we know very well that our economic recovery will basically have to be driven by confidence, on the part of the international community as well as on the part of our own citizens, in our own system of governance.

In the face of the challenges of our time, we in Indonesia will rebuild and refine the institutions that will make the laws of economics work for our society. At the international level, I believe that it is also necessary to build and refine the institutions that will make global economics work for all nations, whether developed or developing.

Globalization is not the demon that has been menacing our prospects for the future. But for too long we have accepted doctrines formulated and waved in the name of liberalization. The most perceptive economists of our day have been pointing out that error, and we must now heed them. Globalization and liberalization never required us to merely compete in dancing to the tune of the market place. It never told us to stop cooperating with one another. But many of us were enchanted with the gospel of unfettered laissez-faire until it was seen that the contagion of a financial crisis in one developing country in one corner of the globe could plunge the entire world into depression.

Now it is clear — if it was not sufficiently clear before — that we are stewards of one another's welfare, that we must extend a hand to every brother and sister who falters, or in the course of globalization none of us, developed or developing, will see salvation. Human destiny is indivisible. Let us never forget that again.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica, His Excellency Mr. Roberto Rojas.

Mr. Rojas (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Costa Rica is extremely pleased at Mr. Didier Opertti's election to preside over the work of this fifty-third session of the General Assembly. We say this not just as the ritual greeting required by protocol, but as an expression of our deeply felt congratulations to a gifted citizen of the Americas and as an expression of our certainty that in this position the noble qualities you have displayed as a great jurist in the inter-American system and as the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of our sister Republic of Uruguay will once again be shown.

In presenting our respectful greetings to the Secretary-General, my delegation also wishes to express its sincere recognition of the enormously courageous efforts he has made in the Secretariat in favour of maintaining international peace and security, as well as his efforts to renew and modernize the United Nations. Costa Rica congratulates you, Sir, for your work and encourages you to continue in your endeavours, which do honour to Ghana and to Africa.

We are approaching the twenty-first century, the third millennium of our era, at a dizzying speed. In a few years, all of us here will be men and women of the past century. Nevertheless, we have the obligation to bestow upon the new millennium a world of greater solidarity. This subject calls for reflection. What have we done so far, and most of all, what are we doing about the imminent future? What positive contributions can we make to the new horizon that is opening up in the annals of history?

Undoubtedly, the very existence of the United Nations constitutes a most positive element. In 1945, this Organization emerged as a successor, on a larger scale, to the ideal of peace embodied in the League of Nations. The 51 countries represented in San Francisco aspired to build a world in which harmony would prevail and where international security would be supported by a far more solid foundation. Today, in this Hall, almost all the countries of the world are represented — we hope that in the near future there will be no exceptions — and each of

them has taken upon itself the obligation to abide by the purposes and principles of the San Francisco Charter.

Under the vigorous leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt, the members of the Commission on Human Rights of the Economic and Social Council worked untiringly, freely and openly discussing the subject, and trying to harmonize approaches that encompassed both Western humanism and the ancient philosophy of the East. The fruit of their efforts was the adoption, on 10 December 1948, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

During those bitter years, when the shadows left by the worldwide conflagration had not yet cleared, and those of the bipolar confrontation were already looming, some believed that the Declaration was a pleasant, romantic and entirely unrealistic suggestion.

Others saw it, on the contrary, as our species' best hope, in the conviction that international relations have ethical value only insofar as they guarantee the dignity of human beings, which is our very essence as rational creatures, through respect for our natural attributes. As the former President of Chile, Mr. Eduardo Frei Montalva once stated, the ratification of the Declaration was a demonstration of faith in peace, faith in the peoples of the world and faith in moral progress.

I am proud to be able to say that Costa Rica enthusiastically supported the Declaration; since then, Costa Rica has expressed its firm belief that human rights cannot be subordinated to the interests of States. Today our country is the seat of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, and the University for Peace of the United Nations. Throughout Costa Rica's history as a Member of the United Nations, it has consistently been committed to the cause of human rights, in both the international arena and the domestic sphere.

On this occasion, I reiterate to the Assembly all Costa Rica's firm, solemn and unconditional commitment to continue fighting actively, whenever and wherever, to achieve full respect for all human rights.

Today my country reaffirms that its voice will continue to be heard in all forums on behalf of the noble ethical and moral ideals that we proclaimed 50 years ago.

Perhaps the most important legacy that the United Nations of the twentieth century will leave to the United Nations of the twenty-first century will be the certitude that human rights are a matter of universal concern. This conviction has allowed the broad conceptual, legal and political development of the subject of human rights. We have debated and signed pacts, conventions and protocols on increasingly specific aspects of human rights.

Despite this prodigious pile of legal instruments, humanity is still very far from having inscribed human rights on its very spirit. In many aspects, the commitment to an ethic of coexistence is as absent from the events of today as it was half a century ago.

Costa Rica observes with regret the instances of intolerance and violence that still persist in our world, the ethnic, religious, cultural, national, ideological or gender discrimination: the conflicts in the Balkans, the tragic wars endured by some African peoples, the situation in Afghanistan and the savagery of terrorism in various parts of the world. We are extremely concerned by the limited progress of the Middle East peace process and the increasing virulence of national extremism and religious fanaticism in certain countries.

My country believes that these serious problems must be faced from an ethical standpoint, with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the basic code for the conduct of both States and individuals.

The legal validity of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is no longer debated today. However, for a long time, doubts and objections were raised as to the possibility of establishing mechanisms to guarantee it.

Thanks to the efforts of many years, the United Nations now has a High Commissioner for Human Rights. My country is proud to have been one of the main sponsors of the establishment of that office.

One of the most important events that has taken place this year was the successful culmination of the effort to establish an International Criminal Court.

The valuable experience of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia — of which the Second Vice-President of Costa Rica, Judge Elizabeth Odio, is a member — undoubtedly contributed to strengthening the conviction on the need for a permanent court to try the most serious violations of human rights.

My country embraces the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, which took place in Rome on 17 July of this year, whereby the international

community rejects and condemns the most heinous crimes against our universal conscience. We are especially pleased that the Rome Conference included within its definition of crimes violations of the basic norms of international humanitarian law, applicable both to international and internal conflicts. In addition, in the light of the tragic experiences of some Latin American countries in the recent past, we are gratified by the inclusion of the legal definition of forced disappearance.

I am pleased to announce that, in the coming days, I will have the honour of signing the Court's Statute on behalf of my country, and I express Costa Rica's firm intention to proceed with its speedy approval and ratification.

My country is convinced of the necessity to establish a commission that will prepare, before the year 2000, the essential conditions for the Statute to enter into force. Costa Rica believes that the commission should be convened as soon as possible.

This year, in addition to celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, my country will celebrate another anniversary which, for Costa Ricans, is no less important: the fiftieth anniversary of the abolition of the Costa Rican army, decreed on 1 December 1948. Only 10 days later, Costa Rica adopted the Magna Carta of international ethics, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The abolition of the army was the culmination of my country's long anti-militaristic history. In 1866, the then President of Costa Rica, Mr. José María Castro, stated that one of the foundations of external peace is a strict adherence to international law, among whose prescriptions, as listed by President Castro, are dignity, good faith, loyalty and frankness. Today, as then, my country believes that in order to invoke international law and aspire to be a respected and valued State without need of military support, Costa Rica's principal duty is to govern its domestic and international conduct by a system of values that is grounded in the fundamental rights of individuals.

As a result of its historical and moral tradition, Costa Rica believes that there are no small countries when it comes to consolidating and preserving peace. Such has been Costa Rica's rule of conduct when it has had the opportunity, as it does now, to be a member of the Security Council.

For this same reason, Costa Rica has tenaciously supported the work aimed at general disarmament, and in particular the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction, and has vigorously condemned the carrying out of nuclear tests. In that regard, my country urges all those States that have not yet done so to adhere fully and unconditionally to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Because of the values that have emerged from its own experience, Costa Rica has invariably repudiated terrorism in all its manifestations, wherever and by whomever it is committed. We do not believe that there is any justification for attacks against innocent people. Likewise, we condemn those Governments that support, shelter and give assistance to those who commit or instigate terrorist acts, in clear violation of their international obligations.

We believe that the international community must make special efforts to prevent and eliminate international terrorism. In this context, we stress the recent negotiations on an International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, and we urge Member States to sign it. We also trust that during this session of the General Assembly decisive progress can be made on the preparation of an international convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism. My delegation wishes to express how deeply pleased it is that the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction is to enter into force within six months. My country urges all those States that have not yet done so to accede to that Convention as soon as possible.

We are pleased to see that in Central America — notwithstanding the conflicts and the turmoil that our countries faced during the last decade — there are signs of progress towards the elimination or substantial reduction of military expenditures. Some countries have eliminated their armed forces, and others have reduced them significantly. Costa Rica does not intend to either export or impose any models on others, but it warmly applauds the decision of these brother countries.

The international community should acknowledge the specific progress that has been made in reducing military expenses by developing countries. In this spirit, Costa Rica wishes to propose the creation of a special fund for Central America, which would be established through contributions of developed countries and organizations. The idea would be that each dollar not

spent on military budgets would be at least matched by contributions for social development programmes to strengthen democratic systems in our region.

The Central American peace process has been one of the most successful ones of recent times. Only a decade ago, in this same Hall, we were exhausting ourselves discussing and commenting on the effects of the Central American crisis. Today, our countries rarely make the headlines of the international press. However, we would like to stress that, notwithstanding Central America's huge social and economical problems, it resolutely continues to work to consolidate for its children a more dignified and freer way of life, more in accordance with the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We have progressed in the areas of electoral democracy and freedom of expression. Now the time has come to consolidate participatory democracy. Therefore, at the end of this century and of the millennium, Costa Rica has begun a process of national political dialogue, with broad popular participation, in order to strengthen our more than 100-year-old democracy.

The Central American countries have worked strenuously for the integration and liberalization of our economies. We have achieved important progress in our integration mechanisms and structural adjustment processes. We are participating actively in the negotiations aimed at creating a free-trade area throughout the Americas, and we continue to maintain a policy of openness and commercial links among the Latin American countries.

Despite the regional efforts to redraft its economic plans and to adapt them to the world market's requirements, Costa Rica views with apprehension the creation of economic unions or commercial blocks that beget new discrimination against third countries. Similarly, new conditionalities in the commercial policy of the industrialized economies and the use of managed-trade mechanisms are a clear impediment to the ideal of free trade and create new inequalities of access to the world economy.

At the same time, we observe that, while the global trade in raw materials and agricultural products is losing its vigour, the exchange of high-technology goods is growing stronger. This means that the portion of trade traditionally carried out by the developing countries is becoming weaker in the global context. In this regard, Costa Rica urges the opening of markets, not only of the small economies, but also of the large and industrialized economies. Costa Rica also advocates commitment to the ideal of free trade that gave birth to the World Trade Organization and respect for its rules and resolutions in order to create an international environment more propitious for developing countries' economic progress.

Free trade encourages economic growth, and economic freedom encourages the creation of wealth within the nations. In accordance with these principles, my country undertook, in 1997, the chairmanship of the negotiating process for the free-trade zone of the Americas, and we are trying to contribute dynamically to its progress.

We are also making efforts to attain fair and non-discriminatory access for Central American products to markets in the United States and the European Union — the region's principal trade partners. In both markets, our countries have been negatively affected by the diversion of trade and investment that have resulted from the granting of preferential concessions to third countries, which are displacing our main exports. We refute the neo-protectionist arguments of the groups who are trying to obstruct the access of Central American products to those markets. For this reason, we are promoting the strengthening of the Caribbean Basin Initiative in order to correct those diversions and inequities. Furthermore, we believe there should be better opportunities for our exports to the European Union through its generalized preferences system. We are also promoting tariff reduction for agricultural products in all the industrialized countries.

At the same time, Costa Rica urges industrialized nations to cooperate with the efforts to strengthen the international financial institutions in order to ensure the stability of the world financial system. Institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and regional entities such as the Inter-American Development Bank must provide support to overcome the crises that cause financial instability, especially in the emerging markets.

While some believe that economic profit and ethics have nothing to do with each other, experience has shown us otherwise. Capitalism without rule of law and not subject to ethical rules usually causes scourges such as the spread of drug-trafficking, the reign of organized crime and corruption.

My country, like many others, has been affected by these phenomena. Mr. Miguel Angel Rodríguez

Echeverría, President of Costa Rica, is actively participating in both the fight against and the prevention of these scourges, and he gave proof of his commitment to this cause when he contributed to the success of the recent special session of the General Assembly on drug-trafficking. For Costa Rica, these struggles can be won only if they have a solid ethical foundation. Genuine ethical leadership can do more for the long-lasting and sustainable prosperity of a society than the best laws and the most detailed treaties.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not only a statement of rights, it is also a clear statement of every human being's duties to the community. One of the fundamental obligations of all persons is to behave fraternally with their fellow men and the environment.

Costa Rica has not been exempt from the problems caused by environmental degradation. However, my country's authorities and many organizations of our civil society are working strenuously to solve them. In a relatively short time, we Costa Ricans have achieved major progress in the task of recovering and preserving our rich biodiversity, while at the same time transforming it into a source of income. For example, Costa Rica is today one of the developing countries that has undertaken a leading role in carbon-fixation projects. We have negotiated important bilateral agreements based on the filtration capability of our forests. Those agreements have allowed us to become the first country to issue "sale of oxygen" certificates as specific proof of the quantity of captured emissions.

My country has been the recipient of important international cooperation programmes. In many areas we continue needing them. Nevertheless, we firmly believe that cooperation is a two-way street in which we can all teach and learn, give and receive. Costa Rica believes that its experience in ecological matters may be useful to many other countries and it makes it available to the international community.

Furthermore, my country would like to express its firm intention to offer technical cooperation for development, in the modest measure of its capabilities, through the action of a specialized office that is being established for such a purpose. Thanks to this office, Costa Ricans will share with other nations our experiences in the areas of health, education, ecology, human rights and electoral development.

For Costa Rica, the respect for diversity consecrated in the Universal Declaration must be an essential characteristic of the Member States of the United Nations. In this regard, we are always conscious of the valuable lesson of the African thinker, Salif Tall Tierno-Bokar, when he taught that the rainbow owes its beauty to the varied tones of its colours in the same way that the voices of various believers make up a harmony that rises up to divinity.

The survival of the human species cannot be based on a system of separate existences. Since human beings first appeared on the face of the earth, they must have had an awareness of their individual limitations and must have understood that they could not survive without the other members of their species. Today, such natural wisdom of our far-distant ancestors continues to be valid. We must live in community in order to build the future.

The concept of love for our fellow men is at the core of all religions. The ancient texts of the great masters of China, Mexico and India, and the Torah, the Gospel and the Koran, regardless of any differences, are all permeated with a deep sense of identity among individuals.

Moral and spiritual perfection, the dream of so many thinkers and the innermost aspiration of so many peoples, cannot be reached without a basis in the constructive and fraternal coexistence of all the nations.

At this moment in history, we the people who inhabit the earth must create a civilization of peace and solidarity. The twenty-first century should be the century of the culture of peace, which is also the culture of freedom, tolerance and solidarity.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, His Excellency Mr. Knut VollebÆk.

Mr. VollebÆk (Norway): This year we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In our global community, the issue of human rights is the concern of us all. For this reason the Government of Norway welcomes the fact that human rights are now being given increased priority in the work of the United Nations. Adoption by the General Assembly of a declaration on human rights defenders on the International Human Rights Day, on 10 December, would represent proof of our strong commitment in this field.

Human rights is basically about human dignity — about protecting the individual against oppression and exploitation, poverty and injustice, marginalization and degradation. The struggle for civil and political rights and for social, economic and cultural rights must be one and the same struggle. When we address breaches of civil and political rights, we must also address the issues of development and poverty.

As a new millennium is upon us, one of our most fundamental challenges is the realization of a humane world. This must be more than a vision. It is a moral imperative. All Governments endeavouring to implement and promote respect for human rights in their societies deserve our wholehearted support. Democracy, transparency and good governance are essential for economic growth, sustainable development and political stability. Governments that continue to disregard basic human rights norms deprive their populations not only of political freedom, but also of improved economic conditions.

The pursuit of a humane world requires new approaches. And new tools. A good example of this approach is the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which was negotiated in Oslo. With the ratification by Burkina Faso, presently chairing the Organization of African Unity (OAU), as the fortieth country, the Ottawa process has in less than two years produced a binding international legal instrument which will enter into force early next year. This has been made possible by a new diplomacy reaching beyond relations between States to engage individuals and non-governmental organizations.

Our efforts to rid the world of the scourge of anti-personnel mines must be intensified so that we can reach the objectives set out in the Ottawa process. Norway has already made a commitment of $120 million over a five-year period to mine action programmes, including assistance to mine victims. We call on other Governments to join in this endeavour. The United Nations has a central role to play in these efforts.

The partnership between Governments, international organizations and civil society demonstrated throughout the Ottawa process should be pursued in our new drive to restrict proliferation of small arms and light weapons. In recent years it has become evident that small arms are a formidable barrier to ending violent conflicts and consolidating peace, political stability and reconstruction of war-torn societies. We need to intensify and harmonize our efforts to combat the illegal trade in and proliferation of such arms, which account for most casualties in today's conflicts.

Norway has committed considerable resources to immediate action to assist populations in war-torn societies. We support demobilization and arms collection programmes in a number of countries, and we have raised the question of what role United Nations peacekeeping operations could play in these areas. To further strengthen these efforts, Norway proposes the establishment of a trust fund to combat the widespread proliferation and illegal use of small arms, in particular through the collection and destruction of such weapons at the end of armed conflicts. Norway will pledge 15 million Norwegian kroner (NKr) — about $2 million — to the establishment of such a trust fund and calls on other countries to follow suit. We propose that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) be charged with the management of the fund.

Norway is gravely concerned by the recent underground nuclear tests by India and Pakistan. I would like to emphasize the crucial importance of both the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) for international efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and achieve nuclear disarmament. Therefore, Norway urges all countries to join the NPT and the CTBT. We believe the United Nations should serve as an important forum for strengthened dialogue and exchange of information on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament and that it should contribute to more transparency and confidence in these crucial matters.

The current world economic crisis clearly illustrates that we are all part of a single global economy. It also illustrates that we are far from fully understanding the powerful forces of globalization, and even further from being able to adequately manage them. The international financial crisis has led to soaring unemployment, plummeting living standards and shattered expectations of a better life for millions of people.

We clearly need a better understanding and better management of the global economy. My Government shares the serious concern expressed by the recent summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Durban. While the process of globalization has led to greater economic opportunities for many, a large number

of developing countries are being left even further behind in the wake of the increasing integration of the world economy.

As was pointed out during last week's high-level meeting on globalization and development here at the United Nations, there is no alternative to multilateral cooperation efforts if we are to maximize the positive effects of globalization, while minimizing its negative aspects.

While our planet is shrinking, the income gap continues to grow — between as well as within nations. At the same time, we are experiencing a steep reduction in official development aid from North to South. It is a regrettable fact that the industrialized countries are increasingly distancing themselves from the agreed United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for development purposes.

Developed and developing countries alike are accusing each other of broken promises and failure to live up to their commitments. What we need is a new partnership based on result-oriented policies in developing countries and a commitment on the part of the developed countries to reach the 0.7 per cent target within an agreed time-frame. Norway, which has been well above this target for decades, is actively seeking to counter the growing donor fatigue and intends to further increase its official development assistance in the years ahead.

Many of our most pressing problems are international in nature and global in scope. International crime and terrorism, environmental degradation and the spread of disease do not need passports to cross borders. They are global problems, requiring global solutions.

As the world changes, so must the United Nations. We have previously commended the Secretary-General for his reform agenda. Much has already been done. It is now up to us, the Member States, to promote the reform process throughout the whole United Nations system.

We cannot ask the United Nations to do more and perform better, while at the same time cutting back on its resources. As a very minimum, all Member States must honour their legal commitments and pay their dues in full, on time and without conditions.

For the poorest and most heavily indebted developing countries, the debt problem represents one of the main obstacles to development. Urgent action is needed to end the unsustainable debt burden of these countries. Norway for its part will launch a comprehensive national debt relief strategy. The strategy will form the basis for our policy for supporting and strengthening the international debt relief schemes. It will also contain additional debt reduction measures on a bilateral basis which will be applied on top of the reductions made under multilateral operations.

No investments yield a higher return than investments in basic social services — in primary health and education. Since the World Social Summit, Norway has actively advocated the 20/20 principle. This calls for a mutual commitment between developed and developing countries to allocate 20 per cent of official development assistance and 20 per cent of national budgets, respectively, to basic social programmes. We encourage all countries to adhere to this target.

Economic growth and social development underpin political stability. But political stability and good governance are also prerequisites for sustained economic development. While the United Nations should retain its vital role in economic, environmental and social affairs, the Organization must also involve itself more extensively in conflict prevention, crisis management and peace-building efforts. In two weeks' time we will be commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping operations. The United Nations has proved indispensable for maintaining stability, peace and security for millions of people, for which it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 10 years ago. At this juncture, we pledge our continued support for the United Nations peacekeeping endeavours. The Organization's capacity must be further enhanced, not least with regard to rapid response to armed conflicts.

In particular, we wish to honour those who have given their lives under the United Nations flag. The increasing number of casualties among United Nations personnel on missions abroad has made us more aware of the security situation for United Nations staff. Today, the Geneva Conventions go a long way in protecting uniformed personnel in combat situations. United Nations personnel working to promote and alleviate the suffering created by war are not protected in the same way under international law. It is therefore important to improve the security situation of United Nations staff, and we urge more countries to sign and ratify the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

To further facilitate the United Nations role in preventing conflicts, Norway took the initiative two years

ago to establish a Trust Fund for Preventive Action. This fund has made it possible for the United Nations to undertake preventive missions and diplomatic initiatives it otherwise would not have the resources to carry out. Some countries have made contributions to the fund. We encourage others to do the same.

To enable the Security Council to better fulfil its prime task of preventing conflict and securing international peace, it is important to enhance its legitimacy while not compromising its efficiency. We need to find broad-based solutions which better reflect the political realities of today.

Conflict prevention, crisis management and peace building clearly require a coordinated approach. We must secure a better unity of purpose and integrate United Nations peace-building efforts with those of other stakeholders. Norway will be taking over the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 1999, and we are determined to further refine the already well established working relationship between the United Nations and the OSCE.

Most armed conflicts of today are taking place within States. Civilians are increasingly affected, and indeed singled out as military targets. In this context, the adoption in Rome a few months ago of the statute establishing an International Criminal Court is truly a historic achievement. The existence of a permanent, global institution of this kind will allow us to address the serious problem of impunity and will significantly enhance deterrence of the most heinous international crimes. The statute also provides for credible protection against biased, arbitrary and otherwise unwarranted prosecutions.

We need more, not less, involvement of the United Nations and regional organizations to prevent underlying conflicts from bursting into flames. In Kosovo, we have in the last few months witnessed an alarming deterioration, where the parties seem determined to resolve the conflict by military means. There is an urgent need for a ceasefire, access for international humanitarian organizations to all parts of Kosovo and stronger involvement by the international community, in order to facilitate a negotiated political solution.

Five years ago the Oslo Accord was signed in Washington, and gave hope for a peaceful future for the people of the Middle East. Although progress has been made, the peace process is today in serious difficulties. There is, however, no alternative to a negotiated settlement. The responsibility for advancing the peace process lies first and foremost with the parties themselves. We therefore urge the parties to do their utmost to build confidence and cooperation and to refrain from all unilateral measures and actions designed to pre-empt the outcome of the final status negotiations.

Although developments in Latin America in general have been positive over the past few years, there are still situations that give cause for concern. Every support should be given to the new Government in Colombia in its efforts to end the armed conflict. The international community should also give continued support to the implementation of the peace accords in Guatemala. Consolidating the peace is as important as ending the war.

Norway commends the Secretary-General for his report on security and development in Africa. Recent developments are indeed worrying and may threaten the stability and future prospects of large parts of the continent. The African nations themselves have the prime responsibility for ensuring a political climate that is conducive to stability and economic growth.

However, the international community must provide political support and assist in mediation, peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, human rights enhancement, demobilization efforts and institution-building. It is vital that these activities be coordinated and mutually supportive. Here the United Nations must play a leading role, in close cooperation with the Organization of African Unity and the subregional organizations. We follow with great interest the ongoing work by the Security Council in this respect, and we look forward to the discussions on the General Assembly's follow-up of the Secretary-General's report during this session.

If we are to meet effectively the many global problems facing us, there is no alternative to concerted multilateral action. We must build a future based on international law, where solidarity and social responsibility are not confined within national boundaries, but stretch across borders and continents. We, as Governments, must do this in close cooperation with civil society, with non-governmental organizations. In all this, the United Nations must be at the very centre of our multilateral efforts.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire and former President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy.

Mr. Essy (Côte d'Ivoire) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me, Mr. President, to offer you my warmest congratulations on your unanimous election to guide the work of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. The honour bestowed upon you attests to the good relations which your country, Uruguay, has forged over the decades with the nations that make up the international community. The noble task which awaits you, far from being merely prestigious or simply one of protocol, frequently proves to be both delicate and difficult.

It involves presiding over the most eminent forum of debate for world affairs during a period in which, in various places, one crisis follows another, such that around the world neither peace nor war prevails. I am convinced that your talents as a diplomat, your passion for peace and development and your enthusiasm will serve you well in dealing with the most complex debates and the most tangled webs of procedure. Rest assured that our best wishes will be with you throughout this session, which, we feel sure, under your expert presidency, will be crowned with success.

I wish also to pay tribute to your predecessor, H. E. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine, for the remarkable way in which he guided our work in the last session and for the personal touch with which he ensured and improved coordination between the main bodies of the United Nations. We feel certain that in his parliamentary career in his country he will display the same efficiency and skill he showed in this forum. Finally, allow me to pay an emphatic tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who, through his tireless commitment, has been able to restore confidence in our Organization and make it an incomparable instrument for international relations.

I wish to hail his efforts to bring peace to the world, and particularly to Africa, and the special attention he gives to the economic and political situation on our continent. I also wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate him sincerely on his excellent report on the work of the Organization, the clarity and conciseness of which will be very useful in inspiring our debate during the fifty-third session.

During the past year, the world has entered a phase of difficulties and uncertainties such as it had not seen for almost a decade. The crisis born in the most dynamic economies of South-East Asia has gradually reached other regions. Today it seems to threaten all the countries of the planet, from the richest to the poorest.

This shows very well the extent to which the phenomena of globalization and interdependence among States and peoples have spread. No country, no matter how prosperous, can now hope to escape a crisis such as the one South-East Asia has suffered and continues to suffer which now threatens other regions. This shows that the fight for development and the struggle against poverty concern all of us.

Emergent economies, which are paying the price of a crisis that, over these last months, has thrown tens of millions of people back into poverty and insecurity, are integral parts of a sort of a global economic and financial puzzle. The jolts these economies are experiencing weaken the whole system.

This risk, which everyone can see is real, should lead us to reconsider our traditional notion of the division between countries of the North and of the South. We should not, of course, ignore here the gulf between North and South or challenge the existence of the distinct forms of poverty that make for starkly different conditions of existence, and even survival, for the most destitute peoples of the industrialized countries and those of the developing countries.

What, on the other hand, is more and more questionable with the advance of globalization is the idea of a possible divergence of destinies, which could lead some countries — the wealthiest — to continue their march forward, while leaving the poor ones "along the side of the road", to quote a popular phrase.

The crisis we have been witnessing for a year now should convince us that there is a common destiny which binds together all Governments and all peoples of the planet. The latter, whether they are richer or poorer, are bound by the same necessity — that of progressing together along the path of development. The current crisis shows us another vital need — that of solidarity, for which multilateral cooperation is the prime instrument. The United Nations must once again become the natural vehicle of this multilateral cooperation. Unfortunately, we must note that this notion of solidarity, which has become an agreed formula in official declarations, is acted upon less and less in any concrete way.

We recall the famous objective — which a few decades ago seemed quite modest — of establishing the desirable level of official development assistance at 0.7 per cent of gross national product of industrialized

countries. In noting, as the Secretary-General has done in his report on the work of the Organization, that official development assistance has been steadily decreasing for a decade and today represents only 0.22 per cent of the gross national product of industrialized countries, we must recognize that this call for solidarity is reaching increasingly deaf ears in international forums.

Along the same lines, I would like to stress that the strategies for development debated and agreed among Governments, as well as the decisions adopted at the major United Nations conferences, so far have not been implemented to the desired extent, due to insufficient financing. The mid-term evaluation of the outcome of the Rio Conference on Environment and Development was in this respect quite revealing of the present financial limits for aid to development. An effort commensurate with the problem would allow us to radically change its basic elements.

The 1998 *Human Development Report*, published by the United Nations Development Programme a few weeks ago, makes some significant comparisons. It shows, for example, that Americans annually spend $8 billion on cosmetics — $2 billion more than the amount needed to finance basic education for a large part of the world population. To quote the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization,

> "a bridge must be constructed between, in effect, the Dow Jones index and the human development index" (*A/53/1, para. 15*).

We expect also that a new drive towards cooperation and development will not only combat poverty and exclusion but also promote international peace and security.

Conflicts frequently have social and economic roots, and this dimension should be fully integrated into the approaches devised by the international community in the areas of conflict prevention, peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building.

I wish to reiterate, and express the support of Côte d'Ivoire for, the proposal made by the Secretary-General in paragraph 30 of his report on the work of the Organization to better use the possibilities of Article 65 of the Charter of the United Nations, which provides that the Economic and Social Council may furnish information to the Security Council upon a request from the latter.

With the exception of very limited applications in 1949 and 1959, this provision of the Charter has not been invoked. Because it is based on fraternity, dignity and equality between peoples and States, solidarity needs to be the cardinal value in the new world that is emerging from the ideological battlefields of the past.

Progress in communications technology has today brought people closer than ever. Stepping outside of their own cultures, men and women can experience the same events at the very same moment. They are upset and shocked by the pictures and consequences of a natural disaster or a terrorist attack. They are impassioned by the same sports events and are reduced to tears by exceptional events such as the liberation of Nelson Mandela or the fall of the Berlin Wall, which give true ethical significance to the evolution of humankind.

During the past decade, we have witnessed spectacular progress, in almost all countries, with respect to the positive values that cement solidarity between peoples. Almost all societies are now open and receptive to pluralism. Every day I see that the peoples of the African continent are hungering for participation. They wish to have their say in national matters and to take their future into their own hands.

Throughout the world, civil society is making its claims and aspirations felt. Everywhere Governments, to varying degrees, are becoming aware of this extraordinary change and, in the context of diverse political formulas and variable schedules, they are acceding to the demands of the people with respect to democratization.

This new global focus on human rights and pluralism is reflected increasingly in the international order. Buttressed by the non-governmental organizations, Governments have decided to ban barbaric weapons such as anti-personnel landmines, whose principal victims are civilians, especially children. The broad and massive support given by the international community to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which has been signed by 128 States and which will enter into force after the deposit by the fortieth State of its instrument of ratification, allows us to hope for success in the efforts undertaken to fight against another scourge — small arms and small-calibre weapons — which affects mainly civilians and foster criminality and insecurity.

Global progress on the ethical level is evident also in the adoption in July 1998 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, thus enshrining the progress begun by the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda. In this respect, the first judgments, handed down on 2 September last, have a dual significance. Fifty years after its adoption by the General Assembly, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide has now seen a concrete continuance: the appalling crime of genocide, repeatedly carried out since 1945, will no longer go unpunished. The second positive element of the judgments rendered by the Arusha Tribunal is the recognition that sexual violence committed systematically and on a broad scale in the context of conflicts meets the definition of the crime of genocide.

Another concern for my Government is the scourge of terrorism, a true hydra-headed menace that is blindly attacking in places where we least expect it. It is no longer enough to forcefully condemn this evil; we must try to extirpate its roots as it stems, with rare exceptions, from injustice or the intolerable humiliation of peoples. The fight against terrorism is first and foremost a fight against injustice in all its forms. Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its sympathy for those States that have fallen victim to bomb attacks. It reasserts its commitment to work in the context of cooperation with all States to eradicate these crimes, which cannot be justified regardless of their motivation.

The time has come, as was stated at the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Durban, to convene an international conference dealing with all aspects of terrorism that would lead to a convention allowing us to eradicate this scourge.

To strengthen cooperation for development and promote democratization and pluralism are the two focal points for the action which the international community should take in order to allow peace and security to progress, which is the fundamental mission of our Organization.

This concern falls in line perfectly with the objectives of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, which, under the leadership of our President, Henri Konan Bédié, is committed to relaunching strong, sound and lasting economic growth and to forge, in a spirit of solidarity, a more united, homogenous society based on participatory, peaceful democracy.

At the political level, the cabinet reshuffle that took place on 11 August last resulted in greater openness and in new political blood. At the institutional level, several measures were adopted aimed at broadening and deepening the regionalization and decentralization process.

Moreover, constitutional reform is being undertaken in order to establish the rule of law, to consolidate State structures and strengthen representative democracy. The latter has given rise to the creation of a Senate, which will help us to strengthen the democratic debate and give us a more balanced representation of the regions.

At the economic level, let me stress that in 1997 — and for the third consecutive year — the rate of growth of our country's gross national product was 7 per cent. That rate, I would underscore, is higher than the demographic rate of growth of 3.8 per cent. Inflation was controlled at 5 per cent in 1997, whereas the rate of investment was 15 per cent of the gross national product, 70 per cent of which was private investment.

It is noteworthy that the management of the Alliance for Africa's Industrialization, which held its first meeting on 17 and 18 September last in Abidjan, reaffirmed that industrialization is a necessity for the economic progress of Africa and is the only means of transforming its economy in order to integrate it positively into the current context of globalization.

Africa will continue to rely for its industrial development on its partners from friendly countries. We wish here to welcome the initiative of the Government of the United States on partnership and economic growth in Africa which aims particularly to allow a number of American products access to the American market.

We wish also to express our gratitude to the Government of Japan for its continuing commitment to the development of Africa, as evidenced by the upcoming International Conference on African Development (TICAD II), set to take place in Tokyo in October.

We also wish to congratulate and thank all the Governments of the donor countries that have forgiven debts to the African countries, especially the least developed ones.

On the social level, I wish to take a moment to mention some points relating to health, a vital element in socio-economic development. Action in the field of health, as the Assembly knows, contributes effectively to the fight against poverty. Côte d'Ivoire has therefore

made this an absolute priority for several decades. Aware that our world has become a global village, we have tirelessly pursued these efforts within our country, while putting more and more effort into the promotion of health at the international level.

Several important recent events prove this commitment: the participation of President Henri Konan Bédié as the representative of our continent at the fiftieth anniversary of the World Health Organization (WHO); the adoption by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) last June of two resolutions proposed by Côte d'Ivoire, one relating to the African fund to combat AIDS and the other on the African initiative to fight against malaria; and the launching of the initiative on anti-retrovirus treatments, for which Côte d'Ivoire has been selected as one of the countries participating in the experimental phase. In order to better mark our commitment to the success of this programme, we have decided to allocate the sum of $1 million to it.

Moreover, Côte d'Ivoire organized a regional meeting, attended by the Presidents of Benin and Ghana, to promote public awareness of, and the struggle against, Buruli's ulcer, a little-known but degrading and destructive illness.

The multiplicity of conflict situations in Africa has become a real subject of concern for the entire international community. Hence the Security Council met on 25 September 1997 at Foreign Minister level to consider the need for concerted international action to promote peace and security in Africa. At the end of that meeting, the Council asked the Secretary-General to submit to it by February 1998 a report containing concrete recommendations regarding the sources of conflict in Africa, way to prevent and address them, and how to lay the foundation for durable peace and economic growth.

In response to this Security Council request, the Secretary-General prepared an excellent report entitled "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa" (S/1998/318), which gives a straightforward assessment of the political and economic situation in Africa and makes objective recommendations, while indicating the mistakes made by African leaders and the shortcomings in international cooperation in this area.

The report essentially always takes us back to the primary mission of our Organization: the maintenance of peace, and the principal instrument for this, which is collective security. The latter remains at the heart of the United Nations Charter. The original idea, it should be remembered, was that in the modern world, any conflict, whether regional or local, could affect the whole of international society, and that through alliances and interventions it could well spread, with all the devastating consequences imaginable.

It is in order to guard against these situations and to provide every means to react to them that the 1945 Charter, in Chapter VII, takes account of the regional character of collective security. The regional mechanism is intended to provide continuity and to strengthen the action of the international community in the maintenance of peace, without in any way challenging the primary role of the Security Council, which, duly informed of the initiatives undertaken by States bound by regional agreements, is the only body which can authorize the use of force.

It is in this spirit, and always taking care to refer first to the Security Council, that the system of regional security has always functioned, be it in Africa or in Europe, even though with the involvement of the Atlantic Alliance in the former Yugoslavia the situation was somewhat different.

The end of the cold war, with a backdrop of change in the general international security situation and an increasing will by the great Powers to limit themselves to interventions in the context of the United Nations, has undoubtedly contributed to the reactivation of regional security. What was at stake, we must agree, was the very survival of certain regions of the world, prey to violent upheavals and mostly abandoned to their own fate. Regrettably, this is the picture which we see in an Africa torn apart by conflicts whose scope and gravity the international community does not always grasp.

These are the realities which were in the minds of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, the Interior and Security of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) when they met recently in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, and then in Banjul, Gambia, to lay the foundations of a mechanism for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts and for the maintenance of peace and security. The resulting text, reached by consensus at the level of experts, will soon be submitted for adoption by the conference of heads of State and Government scheduled for the end of October in Abuja.

West Africa has plenty of experience in this connection, since in recent years it has had to mobilize twice in order to settle two bloody conflicts in Liberia, followed by Sierra Leone, and has thus acquired considerable resources under the flag of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). The success of the organization in carrying out such interventions prompted it to institutionalize ECOMOG as its armed mechanism, which is mainly preventive. This is a big step forward for ECOWAS, originally created as a specialized subregional organization with the goal of promoting economic cooperation and eventually the integration of its member States.

This subregional mechanism will of course become part of the general system of the United Nations Charter and the regional system of OAU. It will cover all aspects of security, including natural disasters. Political considerations cannot be forgotten, for experience has shown that conflicts may well lead to the decay of governmental institutions, the economy and social and political institutions.

Under these circumstances, any intervention strategy is designed first and foremost to deal with disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of combatants or displaced persons, as well as the rehabilitation of infrastructures and above all the reconstruction of society, with democracy as the key word.

All in all, member States believed that it was precisely because it was conceived for development and economic integration that ECOWAS was particularly suited to undertake peace-building in the region. The implementation of the mechanism will depend above all upon the political will of member States. For its part, Côte d'Ivoire will be involved, as it was in the quest for peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and as it is now in the case of mediation to bring peace back to Guinea-Bissau.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the Governments of the United States of America, France and Great Britain for deciding to harmonize their various initiatives to assist our armies in order to enhance our peacekeeping capabilities.

In this connection, I am happy that we are commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the first peacekeeping operation in 1948, and I pay tribute to the memory of all the men and women who have given their lives in the service of the United Nations.

Assuring collective security in the context of credible international cooperation and guaranteeing fair, sustainable development is an ongoing challenge to the United Nations; it must urgently provide appropriate, concrete answers.

In this regard, I believe that our action must be conducted on three very distinct fronts.

In the first place, we must firmly recall, whenever necessary, the fundamental principles proclaimed by the San Francisco Charter concerning relations between States, and in particular the independence and territorial integrity of Member States of the United Nations. Since the end of the cold war, conflicts between States have almost entirely disappeared, and that fully reflects the legal force of the principles I have just mentioned.

Let me stress that in Africa the principle of the inviolability of borders is of capital importance, as the OAU has emphasized since its establishment. The upheavals in the Great Lakes region must be settled in accordance with this principle.

Secondly, it is necessary to discourage and ban from international society those regimes which violate the most elementary principles of democracy.

Finally, it is vital to enhance international peace by a clear delineation of the responsibilities of the United Nations and regional organizations. In this connection, we would like to note and hail the complementarity and harmony of efforts made, within the context of the United Nations, by the Non-Aligned Movement, the OAU and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), in order to put an end to the new crisis besetting the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Their combined forces have secured the return to stability of several West African countries.

Here, I would like to salute in particular the action of ECOWAS and its military component, ECOMOG, and invite the international community to provide them with every possible support necessary for the accomplishment of their mission. This interaction between the world Organization and regional organizations must be further strengthened in the future.

In conclusion, I would like briefly to mention the veritable "sea serpent" of the process of reforming the United Nations and the United Nations system and to express a certain disappointment at the very limited

results we have achieved after several years of effort. The question of restructuring the Security Council seems to be at a standstill, even though, in almost ritual fashion, at one session after another we renew the mandate of the Working Group charged with reaching an agreement acceptable to all Member States.

As for the excellent reform programme that the Secretary-General presented to us last year, it has certainly been very positively received, but we have postponed certain decisions that are ours alone to make with regard to certain of his suggestions and recommendations. I hope that the present session of the General Assembly will enable us to enrich our thinking on reform and finally move on to action in this sphere.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abul-Qader Ba-Jammal, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Yemen.

Mr. Ba-Jammal (Yemen) (*interpretation from Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Yemen, I have great pleasure in expressing to Mr. Opertti our heartfelt congratulations on his election as President of the present session of the General Assembly. We are confident that his competence and experience will enable him to guide the session's deliberations and achieve its objectives.

At the same time, I should like to express our recognition of the good offices of Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the Organization, and of his great success in serving peace within the framework of preventive diplomacy in order to defuse international crises before they flare up and to protect innocent victims. I also have great pleasure in noting the intellectual and organizational efforts that are being made to revitalize United Nations activities in order to keep abreast of developments at the end of the present century and meet the demands of the next. We wish Mr. Annan every success in carrying out his future tasks.

The Republic of Yemen, its Government and people, has made consistent endeavours to strengthen democratic practices based on political pluralism, freedom of the press, guarantees of public freedom and the protection of human rights.

The Republic of Yemen has realized the vital importance of carrying out political, economic, financial and administrative reforms, together with a programme of stabilization and restructuring. When the due historical process brought about the unity of the country, Yemen inherited two political and economic systems based on different organizational, cultural and ideological structures. The Republic of Yemen, which represents the united Yemen, has therefore launched a process of radical political and institutional reform intended to bring about national, social and political integration, making democratic practices more deeply entrenched and increasing society's participation in the political decision-making process. This includes increasing the social role of Yemeni women, liberating them from all constraints on their participation and encouraging their integration in development.

Naturally, bringing about economic and administrative reforms based on an open and liberal economy, free trade and the increased participation of the private sector requires new legal and administrative mechanisms which may have a negative impact on segments of society with limited income and on the unemployed. Undoubtedly, this provides an incentive for the provision of assistance for all the countries engaged in this experience, including Yemen, in order to achieve the concrete economic and financial results that can alleviate the negative impact of such changes on the social sectors that are unable to respond to the process of economic and financial adjustment and appropriate restructuring in a natural and appropriate way. That is why it is imperative for the economic reform process to be accompanied by a social safety net to ensure social and economic equilibrium and alleviate the impact of change affecting the poor, unemployed and limited-income groups, with regard to their simple lives and subsistence existence.

This is a task which makes it incumbent upon the international financial institutions to recognize their responsibilities in those areas and to intensify their development programmes with social, demographic and environmental dimensions. The flow of investments and assistance from rich countries to the less developed countries have to be increased in order to bridge the structural gap and enable our society to integrate and increase its positive partnership in sustainable development.

The world today is based on integration and complementarity. It aspires to globalization based on free trade, free exchange and open markets. However, these can only be achieved by regional cooperation of government and private sectors of the countries of each

region. Thus our transition to globalization can be achieved through the bridges of regional cooperation, enabling us to make gains and achieve the common interests of our peoples without disregarding specificities or neglecting elements of harmony and regional integration. This approach would undoubtedly help in making concrete the spirit of fraternity, interdependence and integration, and would provide an opportunity to ensure that the fundamental factors for peace and acceptable coexistence exist, with respect to all regional parties, which will assist in ensuring a balanced and comprehensive world peace.

In this context, we demand that help and assistance be provided to the developing countries and the least developed countries, in order to enable them to minimize the negative impact of the globalization of the world economy on their national economies and to achieve levels enabling them to participate with the developed countries through competitiveness in producing high quality commodities at competitive prices. This could be accomplished once they have made reasonable progress in the context of regional integration.

Democracy, social justice, human rights, economic and political reforms and serious regional cooperation can only be achieved when there is peace, stability and full security. Today, given the unstable nature of peace in our region, we are again apprehensive lest the situation explode. This is due to Israeli intransigence and continuous disregard of the resolutions of international legitimacy. It is also due not only to the Netanyahu Administration's continued rejection of international resolutions obliging Israel to withdraw from the Palestinian occupied territories, the occupied Golan Heights and South Lebanon, but also of the undertakings of the previous Administration of the late Yitzhak Rabin at the Madrid Conference and in the Oslo accords.

The current construction of new settlements; the changing of the historical heritage of East Jerusalem, including the attempts to obliterate its Arab identity; the changing of historical realities and demography: all this testifies to the present Israel Government's flagrant obstinacy and arrogance. We therefore demand that these practices, which present further obstacles to the peace process, be halted forthwith.

In order to prevent the region being plunged back into the cycle of conflict, tension and bloodshed, we appeal to the international community to take the necessary measures to compel Israel to honour its international obligations, pursuant to the resolutions of international legitimacy and all other relevant obligations and agreements.

It has become clear that the policy of starvation, deprivation and economic sanctions imposed on States, whether individually or collectively, is of no avail as an effective means to the realization of certain political goals, especially in an era in which freedom, democracy, and enhanced respect for human rights and the right to self-determination are reaffirmed. Consequently, the victims of this policy are the most vulnerable sectors of the targeted States. That is why we must reconsider the policy of imposing sanctions, and must reassess their impact, reaffirming the importance of humanitarian values and ensuring that the real interests of peoples are not arbitrarily violated or threatened for reasons of which these peoples are innocent. As we have already said, sanctions are no longer a useful tool for the realization of political objectives. We must engage in peaceful dialogue, and define a time framework and agreed criteria for the sanctions before they are imposed and put into effect. We must also ensure that the people and the poorest social sectors are not the first and direct victims, as is currently the case in Iraq and Libya.

While reaffirming respect for international resolutions, we reiterate the need to lift the sanctions from Iraq and Libya. These have caused serious damage and severe human suffering in these fraternal countries. Children, old people and women have been particularly affected.

Terrorism has become an international phenomenon, and its effects and repercussions are not confined to any one country, people or ideology. It concerns all nations and peoples, and there is a pressing need for the international community to respond immediately to the demand to establish a political, intellectual and institutional system at the international and regional levels in order to combat it and eradicate the causes of this uncivilized and inhuman phenomenon, and to deal with its negative consequences.

In this regard, the Republic of Yemen has absolutely rejected all forms of terrorism. Yemen shares the feelings of every member of the international community: fear and concern at the continuation and increase of this anti-civilizational phenomenon which goes counter to all human values. We therefore call for genuine cooperation to combat this phenomenon collectively and responsibly.

My country pays particular attention to developments in fraternal Somalia. We hope that the international community will help to resolve the conflict between the various warring factions and political groupings. But at the same time we would like to remind our brothers in Somalia that there can be no solution without the cooperation of the Somalis themselves primarily with regard to the solutions offered to them from abroad.

Our concern for the situation in Somalia is a result of our feelings of fraternal responsibility, in addition to being a duty dictated by neighbourliness, especially since we are the only country in the region that has received waves of refugees from Somalia and other countries fleeing either national conflicts or purely economic circumstances. The Republic of Yemen has paid a high price and has sustained heavy suffering for its proximity to the Horn of Africa.

Our modest potentialities are not adequate to deal with this human influx into our country. We already have difficulty meeting the needs of our own population. The refugees have exacerbated our difficulties, and represent an intolerable economic and social burden. The provisions made by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are insufficient to meet the needs of the refugees in our country. We therefore request the international community to provide us forthwith with assistance in carrying out our humanitarian responsibilities towards our refugee brothers. We further call upon all parties in the Horn of Africa and the concerned Arab parties to cooperate in reaching realistic solutions to this protracted crisis.

Many years have elapsed since the issue of reforming the United Nations was first raised, especially with regard to equitable geographical representation on the Security Council and the formulation of criteria to limit the coercive use of the veto. We fully support the call for the application of democratic norms in and universal representation on the Council in order to reflect the growth of the membership of the General Assembly since the 1950s and the major developments since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the cold war and the expansion of the horizons of globalization — all of which make it imperative to reform the Security Council. It is a pressing need that must be answered if justice and democracy in international relations are to be achieved, in conformity with the increased contacts and improved relations between peoples.

We therefore support the Open-ended Working Group set up for this purpose. We appreciate what has been achieved within the framework of its mandate, pursuant to the resolution of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly in 1993. We also appreciate the cooperation demonstrated by this Working Group. We call for the continuation of its work in order to fulfil its mandate at an early date.

It is incumbent upon us to cooperate in creating an appropriate atmosphere for the establishment of a new international order based on justice, freedom of choice and tolerance. It is our responsibility to work together for humanity and its prosperity, and to draw ever closer to our objective to live as neighbours on the planet.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

(*spoke in French*):

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I wish to make a statement in exercise of the right of reply in connection with the statement made by the Japanese Prime Minister with regard to our satellite launching.

The Japanese authorities are now pushing the situation in the North-East Asian region to the extreme in the wake of our satellite launching. The satellite launch is entirely a matter of the sovereignty of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Launching a satellite is not a privilege for a few countries. Any country which has the capability to do so may launch a satellite. We are therefore not going to become embroiled in a quarrel with Japan, as we have not committed any wrongdoing with regard to the satellite launch.

I now wish to reiterate our firm and principled position on the frantic anti-Democratic People's Republic of Korea campaign staged by Japan in the wake of the satellite launch. Japan is crying out against our satellite launching as a threat to security. Japan made public, all-out criticisms against the Democratic People's Republic

of Korea, inciting gangsters to assault Korean citizens in Japan. Furthermore, Japanese authorities are calling for a strike on our military bases. Japan accuses our country of not informing them of the launch in advance, though Japan has never informed us about the scores of satellites it has launched in the past. Japan sounds the alarm that our satellite launching is a threat to peace and security, while its launching of missiles and satellites does not constitute a threat to peace and security in the region.

We declare that this is the logic of thieves, Japanese style. Why is Japan so frantic, and why is it overreacting over our satellite launch? Japan is using our satellite launch as an excuse to realize its militaristic ambition. It is ridiculous that Japan is talking about sanctions and countermeasures. We are fully accustomed to sanctions. We have been living for more than 50 years under United States and Japanese sanctions and blockades. We will live in the future in our own way.

It is necessary for Japan to contemplate that reactions such as the hostile acts against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, attacks on Korean citizens in Japan and calls for a strike on our missile bases pose a threat to peace and security. Japan is inviting disaster and destruction with these rash and thoughtless acts. Such hostile and belligerent acts lead us time and again to renew our determination not to tolerate Japan's arrogance.

The times are changing, despite Japan's wishes. Today is not the 1950s, when Japan earned big chunks of money by providing logistical support for the United States Army in the Korean War. We will retaliate against Japan for its hostile acts against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and will take revenge against it for its past crimes. This is our firm determination. It is very important for the Japanese authorities to have correct knowledge about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its people.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): That is a hard act to follow.

May I respond briefly to the remarks made earlier today by the Foreign Minister of Argentina concerning the Falkland Islands.

I welcome the Foreign Minister's references to the high level of cooperation between the United Kingdom and Argentina which increasingly characterizes our bilateral relationship. The British Government sincerely hopes that the progress which is being achieved will be built on and developed, and in that regard looks forward with pleasure to the visit which President Menem will pay to the United Kingdom later this year.

The British Government does not accept the Foreign Minister's remarks about sovereignty. We have no doubt about Britain's sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and the other British dependencies in the South Atlantic.

In the Falkland Islands we must heed the wishes of the people. The elected representatives of the islanders expressed their views clearly when they visited the United Nations for the debate in the Committee of 24 on 6 July. They asked the Committee to recognize that they, like any other democratic people, should be allowed to exercise the right of self-determination. As the democratic voice of the Falkland Islands people they reiterated their view that they did not want to be part of Argentina.

Despite our differences with Argentina on the subject of sovereignty, we maintain a constructive dialogue with the Argentine Government on matters such as hydrocarbons, development and fisheries in the South Atlantic. We continue to hold discussions on these issues on a regular basis, while maintaining our position regarding sovereignty over the Falklands, and value these practical steps to develop United Kingdom-Argentine cooperation.

Ms. Ramírez (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Argentine Republic, having heard the statement made by the delegation of the United Kingdom, would like to endorse the concepts expressed in the general debate this afternoon, 21 September, by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship, Mr. Guido di Tella.

The meeting rose at 7.40 p.m.